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Comment

IT'S GETTING very close to put up or shut up time as the top riders' pre-season training and testing schedules come to a close and the motocross world's attention focuses on Hawkstone Park for the big international meeting on March 5.

It's hard to believe that this year's event will be the eighth international on the trot but it's harder still to work out why it took the Salop club so long to abandon their once traditional New Year's Day meeting in favour of this far more spectator-friendly race.

As a youth I spent too many New Year's Days running the risk of frostbite and hypothermia high on the hills above Rochdale at Back Cowm Quarry. So by the time I'd quit trials the last thing I wanted to do was head to Hawkstone on January 1 when I could be sleeping off a

hangover at home.

Fortunately, common sense prevailed and the masterminds behind the international should feel pretty proud of what they've achieved. There was a time when all the star names headed to Beaucaire in the South of France for the season-opener but now everyone knows Hawkstone's where it's at.

DBR's been associated with the meeting for almost as long as it's been running and we're delighted to continue our involvement for '06. British MX (or, more accurately, SX) has had a couple of reasons to hang its head in shame over the past few months - now it's time to get back a bit of self-respect.

With GPs in England and Northern Ireland planned for the coming season plus the big one, the MX des Nations, in September – it's time to prove that even though it seems we can hardly organise a *s-up in a brewery when it comes to indoor events, move the action outside and

no-one does it better.

PS This month marks another milestone in DBR history. I'm sad to say that after the neck-end of six years in the hotseat Radio America's Jeff Kocan has decided enough is enough and his time would be better spent concentrating on his job as senior editor for Racer X. And drinking. Heavily. Thanks for all your help over the years mate - it's been very much appreciated.

PPS If any of you who've been watching the Celebrity Big Brother evictions spotted a DBR sign being waved as Z-lister Jodie Marsh got the heave-ho you weren't seeing things. The chilled little pinkies holding on to it belong to our commercial manager Jo Aspin and office dominatrix Sarah Hodkinson who decided a 10-hour return trip to the Big Smoke was worthwhile to show the DBR love for about 0.5 of a second. Now that's dedication to the cause...and we thought they were just a couple of saddos who wanted to get on TV! PPS If any of you who've been watching



Get your fix of world class MX

MX FANS will get their first taste of world class MX in '06 when the Salop club stages its annual Hawkstone International Motocross at the famous Shropshire venue on March 5

After seven successful years the event is rightly regarded as the world's premier pre-season international - a fact more than backed up by the stellar entry list for this year's races which is the best you'll see all year outside of GPs and the MX des Nations.

Heading the entry is record-breaking nine-time world champion Stefan Everts and he'll be joined on the gate by former world champs Joel Smets, Sebastien Tortelli, Mickael Pichon and Steve Ramon. Between them the five share an amazing 19 world crowns.

Dutch world championship contender Marc De Reuver's also signed up to race and will be banging bars with other big names including Kiwi vice-world champ Josh Coppins, Everts' Rinaldi Yamaha team-mate Cedric Melotte and factory Suzuki star Kevin Strijbos.

British honour will be upheld by De Groot

Kawasaki's Stephen Sword who makes his debut in the MX1 division plus GP stars including Billy MacKenzie, Carl Nunn, Gordon Crockard and

The MX1 battle in particular should be extra fierce this year with Everts – who's already

announced that '06 will be his final year of top-flight MX - taking on Tortelli in Europe on equally-matched machinery for the first time since the Frenchman beat him at the '98 Greek GP, took his 250cc title and then disappeared off to the States.

The presence of Pichon will also add some spice to the mix and there's sure to be emotional scenes in the Smets camp as the five-time world champion - already retired from the GP scene makes a farewell visit to a track he regards as his favourite.

Ticket bookings are available in advance and families who book early can take advantage of special discounts - to book contact G2F on 0161 7636660.

Entry prices have been pegged at £20 for adults for the third year running with 10-15-year-olds and OAPs getting in for £10. Under-10s get in for free and the price of admission includes a DBR-produced programme. Can't be bad! For more details check out the Salop club's website at www.hawkstonemx.co.uk

Hawkstone Park will be AA sign-posted from both the A49 and A53 north of Shrewsbury so you've got no excuses to miss it.

 Companies interested in taking one of the few remaining trade stands or discussing other sponsorship opportunities should contact G2F on the above number.

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Cover: After 15 years in the UK Paul Cooper's heading home to SA – it just won't be the same without him... (Redeye) Contents main image: Brian Deegan at the Winter X Games (Paul Buckley)



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Townley injured during SX testing

BEN TOWNLEY, the '04 world 125cc champ who upped sticks for the US at the end of last year, may have to sit out the entire '06 SX season after dislocating his right knee while testing for his new Monster/Pro Circuit Kawasaki team.

The 21-year-old Kiwi issued an open letter to his fans explaining the extent of the injuries...

'I was immediately fitted for a brace to keep my leg stable but let me keep my quadracep muscles working and keep my range of motion right up until the operation. The surgeons will perform a cadaver operation where they will graft ligaments into my leg from a donor to repair the damage. Once the op is completed I will be straight into rehab, using a machine to keep passive movement going.

'From there it will be all up to me – the recovery will be a long time and I will have to work hard over the next few months to rebuild my strength and fitness in order to return to racing. As of yet there is no time frame on when I will be back on a bike but I will only return to racing when I am 100 per cent fit and strong and ready to win races.'

MAXIMUM MEN

CHANGES IN the Maximum Solutions Suzuki team have seen John May move up to the MX1 division for 2006, leaving Lewis Gregory and Alex Snow to defend the outfit's honour in MX2.

The team – which may or may not be joined by super-quick Kiwi Scott Columb later in the year – had a quick scuffle for the hair gel before posing for this pic. "They're a lovely looking bunch of young men," team boss Rob Hooper might have said if we'd contacted him for a quote.





ducti wallets must be won

ONCE UPON a time a group of friends were sat around a table with an industrial-sized roll of duct tape, presumably a large quantity of beer and not a lot else.

Once they had finished taping each other to chairs and trying to remove each others' eyebrows (by this point someone probably had to pop out for tequila) one bright spark came up with the idea of making a wallet out of the sticky stuff – and the ducti brand was born. Genius!

We've got 10 of the wallets to give away and all we want to know is the name of the rider gracing this month's cover of DBR.

Is it:

- A) Gary Cooper
- B) Paul Cooper
- C) Tommy Cooper
- D) Mini Cooper
- E) Nissan Micra

Got the answer? Okay, write it down on the back of a sealed envelope, postcard or a used £20 note and send it – along with your name, address and a daytime contact number – to us at 'ducti comp', DBR, 12 Victoria Street, Morecambe, Lancs LA4 4AG. Entries close on March 9 with the first 10 correct entries drawn at random each getting a ducti wallet of their very own...



I WOULDN'T have thought there would be too many connections between FMX and 'Take My Breath Away', the 1986 chart-topping hit from soft rockers Berlin. Heaven knows I've been trying to make one but until now I've been unsuccessful. However, I believe I've found the missing link — The Extreme Sports Channel. Bear with me on this one...

'Top Guns' from the world of FMX including 15-year-old rising star Hannes Ackerman, Fabian Bauersach and team-mate Busty Wolter turned out for the Eastpak German Masters in 'Berlin' last October. And Extreme were there to deliver you all the highlights including Busty's epic final run consisting of two back-flips, huge whips and possibly the biggest holyman I've ever seen... more than enough to 'Take My Breath Away'.

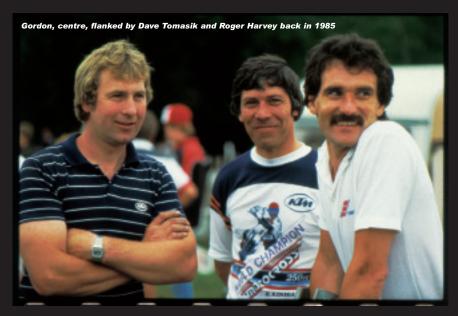
Eastpak German FMX Masters premieres on March 30 at 7pm on Extreme Sports Channel. Stuart Clapp

AMCA DEAL

EACH AND every 2006 AMCA licence holder will be able to can claim a fantastic £30 discount on a three-pack of Pirelli motocross tyres.

The pack consists of two rears and one front tyre with the most popular tread patterns all being available including the formidable MT32 – the exact same tyre that helped Stefan Everts to win his ninth world title in 2005.

All licence applicants will receive a voucher with a list of participating dealers when they receive their new licences.



GOODBYE GORDON

British MX ambassador, KTM stalwart and all-round good guy bows out

Words and photo by Jack Burnicle

THE SAD, sudden death of Gordon 'GC' Jones in January has deprived us of a wonderful man whose wit and infectious grin lit up British motocross for almost three decades.

Most of that time was devoted to KTM, GC remaining loyal during its barren times and helping nurture the Austrian marque back to the health and splendour it enjoys today.

Born to a farming family in Hewlesfield, Gloucestershire, Gordon Christopher Jones (I never really knew his middle name!) hated grammar school with a passion. Finishing at 16 in Ledbury, Herefordshire, where his farm-managing father had settled, Gordon went on a five-year tool making apprenticeship in Cardiff. Already married to a local Ledbury girl and racing motocross – and an outstanding engineer – he loved knocking stuff up on a lathe but took over a car business near Stroud in 1973 when a bad knee injury stopped him riding.

Gordon had moved back to Ledbury, doing repairs, when he latched on to an outstanding young local prospect, buying CZs and spannering for Dave 'the Dog' Tomasik. It was to prove a long and fruitful partnership.

He bought a motorcycle shop in huge, rambling premises on Worcester Road, Ledbury, in 1977 and retained its unlikely name, 'H C Cecil'. This was typical GC – understated and modest almost to a fault.

Initial contact with Don Howlett at Comerfords, then the KTM importers, led GC and the Dog into a career-long association with Katoom which continued when Bryan Goss took over in the early '80s.

The 1980 season proved a prime year for the pair, the effervescent Tomasik and his HC Cecil KTM taking the British 250 championship down to the wire against Jonathan Wright's factory Kawasaki and also winning the final round of the British Open at Newbury to clinch second place in the series.

They also occasionally ventured abroad, David missing out on 10th place and a point in the 1981 Austrian GP when passed on the last lap by his works team-mate Gerard Rond. And they finished second again in the inaugural Weston Beach Race of 1983, the same year they began a serial domination of the Haynes four-stroke series.

In 1984 GC built Kurt Nicoll's very special short-stroke air-cooled engine and in '85 unexpectedly hit the 500cc grand prix trail when Danny 'Magoo' Chandler arrived in the UK and

promptly switched from Kawasaki to KTM. They were the only non-Honda winners that year when Magoo stormed to victory in the French GP.

Besides managing the UK-based race team and

Besides managing the UK-based race team and spannering every weekend for Tomasik, Gordon took over importing KTMs in 1987. A constant and popular visitor to the factory, he chain-smoked his way to Austria and back picking up vanloads of bikes!

In 1990 interest in the brand new 250 — developed during the 1989 GPs by Broc Glover — produced their best ever UK sales figures. Typically, GC had driven to Austria to pick up a pre-production model for his rider (and current supercross entrepreneur) Matt Bates. "I won a British Support Championship race at Foxhill first time out," recalls Matt. "Gordon and his wife Jenny looked after me so well when I came out of schoolboys. I virtually lived with them. He was the nicest, nicest man in motocross."

'GC' was also involved over the years with stars like Bryan Wade, Vic Allan, Stuart Coyle, Mervyn Anstie, Dave Watson, Brian Wheeler, Jeremy Whatley, the ever-present Russ Jarman, Rob Hooper and Ulstermen Stephen Russell and Laurence Spence, who both fondly remember living at Gordon's house and using his workshop. In fact GC and his wife and long-standing working partner Jennifer kept a virtual open house at Ledbury where many of us bedded down beneath those draughty rafters!

When KTM went bust in the early '90s Gordon never wavered and picked up the pieces, buying and selling – according to his son Simon – "whatever bikes we could get whenever we could get them.

"It was good fun," adds Simon, a real chip off the old block, "because every bike sold was an achievement in itself."

KTM pulled through and even when they departed the Ledbury fold Gordon remained a dealer until a couple of years ago. Meanwhile, he'd teamed up with equally genial Italian John Boni's Wind Trading company in 1999. This maintained GC's love of being involved with teams through Wind clothing, WRP products and even LEM minibikes. And in recent years, racehorse owning had brought the sparkle back into Gordon's eyes!

Truly a man of the people (and his sport), Gordon succumbed to pancreatic cancer aged only 61 and his funeral packed out Ledbury's huge church where many friends, riders and former rivals like Stephen Russell, Dave Watson, Rob Hooper and Roger Harvey enjoyed an address by Gordon's loyal lieutenant Russ Jarman.

GC would have loved it!

Our thoughts go out to his wife Jenny, sons Simon and Adrian and Gordon's three grandchildren. Their granddad truly was a sportsman, a gentleman and a cherished one-off.

BIRCH BOOST

SUFFOLK FREESTYLER Chris Birch – who shot to FMX fame under the wing of Andy Godbold and the Bolddog freestyle team – has decided to head in a new direction for 2006.

Chris will now ride for Jimmy Verburgh's **FMX4ever.com** team out of their base in Belgium alongside fellow Brit Chris Brock and a team of Europe's finest jump-monkeys.

THE BROTHERS GRIN!

WILTSHIRE-BASED nippers Tom and Ash Williamson are stoked to pick up a new sponsorship deal from Freestylextreme for the coming season. The pair – who are planning to take on all comers in this year's 125cc AMCA championship – recently picked up new Kawasaki 125 and 250F machines and enough Skin Industries racewear to last the season.

SOCAL'S BACK!

AFTER A year out of the UK scene, SoCal Racing are returning with a new range of MX clothing for '06. Promotion and sales of the new kit are the responsibility of Laurie Squirrell so all trade and retail enquiries should be directed to her way on 07747 571462.

BIKER BAR!

WHERE DO GNCC championship-winning bikes go when their day in the dirt is done? Well, in the case of Paul Eddy's '01 KX250 a better place is the simple answer! Bob Harden owns the bike in question – along with another seven of Fast Eddy's GNCC machines – and he kindly lent it to the Quaker Steak and Lube watering hole in Charleston, WV, where it now takes pride of place...









08704 428 096



TYLA RATTRAY

Can Styla 30 the distance?

MARC DE REUVER

Can Calimero go the distance?





JOSH SPICE

Our favourite Kiwi wannabe world champ lines up the big prize for 2006

Plus... Hell's Gate, AMA SX update, Ride MX Factor – the finalists, Spanish quad madness and much, much more...



ON SALE







"At most of the riding spots we would always bump into some other riders from England or Europe – De Reuver and Tortelli turned up at most tracks as did Tommy Searle, David Willet and schoolboy racer Sam Davis"

Jet Lagged!

Flying off to the Californian sun for pre-season practice is all very well but it plays havoc with your sleep pattern

IT'S BEEN just three days since I got back from the States, it's one in the morning and I can't sleep. Yes, you've guessed it – jet lag! Although it's so early in the morning I thought now would be a good time to write my column seeing as my memory is still fresh.

Jodie and I arrived at Los Angeles LAX airport around six in the evening after a night flight from Gatwick. We were both feeling tired and the airport was busy and as we walked through passport control Jodie noticed Geri Halliwell – Ginger Spice!

After collecting all our bags we jumped on a shuttle bus that took us to our rent-a-wreck place. I had a small van I'd booked waiting for me there, well I thought I had a van but the guy there said 'sorry, we have no vans'. I argued with him for 20 minutes but ended up leaving with a pick-up truck.

It was only a 45-minute drive to where we stayed. We were so tired we went straight to sleep and I ended up waking at two in the morning and sat staring at the walls for a few hours before getting up and heading down to the gym. The gym was part of the complex but when I got down there it was closed – it didn't open until six and it was only a quarter to five. The door wasn't locked so I let myself in, turned on the lights and TV and cracked on with a workout.

The next day I went back to the car rental place and swapped my pick-up for a van. Now I had a van I could make the two-minute drive from our hotel to Kawasaki HQ to pick up a bike. The guys there couldn't have helped me anymore than they did and they looked after me real well.

The weather was really nice and all the tracks were in awesome condition. At most of the riding spots we would always bump into some other riders from England or Europe. De Reuver and Tortelli turned up at most tracks as did Tommy Searle, David Willet and schoolboy racer Sam Davis.

I was able to go and watch both the Anaheim I and II supercross races. The racing was awesome and it was nice to see Kawasaki winning. I didn't manage to have a chat with Ben Townley but I did pop over to see ex GP racer Andrew McFarlane. He was enjoying his time out there but he'd crashed mid-week breaking his toes so he was on crutches.

It was my birthday while I was out there so a group of us got together for a bite to eat. Hot-tub, Big Dave, French Fred, TC's new technician, Tim, his wife Clare and son Zac as well as Iggy and Sam Davis. Cheers guys for making it a good night!

We didn't have too much spare time to go sight seeing but we managed to get down to the beach on a couple of my days off. Even though the weather was great we never made it into the sea so I just relaxed on the beach drinking Starbucks coffee and watching the surfers.

I was riding most days which is good for this time of year. I also took my road bicycle with me so I was able to get some good cycling done as well. Overall I had a good time out there on the bike and training before heading back for pre-season testing.

It's nice to be back home to see our dogs and rabbit.

The only thing is that the weather here is freezing, I'm off to



Holland next week to do some riding before my first race on February 12 at Mantova in Italy. It's a bit early I know but it will be a good warm-up and will give me a chance to gauge myself against the other riders.

I'm looking forward to it all starting up again and I'm especially looking forward to the Hawkstone International and the British championship. It will be nice to see all my fans again.

Speaking of fans, I bumped into a few British ones at the Anaheim supercross races who came and asked for my autograph. They were really nice people and I ended up chatting with them for about 10 minutes.

Well I'm feeling a bit tired so I'm gonna try and get some sleep to help me over the jet lag! Good luck and see you soon...

Words by Stephen Sword Photo by Ray Chuss





















FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT NO FEAR MX DIVISION AT +33 442.163.604 WWW.NOFEARMX.COM

"I met up with Mike Brown for lunch one day when we didn't ride and talked about going cycling together but to be honest I reckon he'd kill me on the bicycle as he's really into cycling in a big way"

Hot n' happy!

It's all going great guns for Gordy as he prepares for the coming season in the Stateside sun

YA YA ya ho! It's me again and I'm back with my homework for my English teacher Mr Lawless. I've got my A4 pad, my pen and a cup of tea and I'm sitting in an American RV Motorhome thinking of everything I've been up to in the last few weeks.

I'm in California and I have been for a while now – riding and testing with the mandatory training to get myself into a better position to take some glory from the current superstars of the motocross circuit. It's been very productive so far for me and I'm really enjoying myself again – something I've missed.

Graham Hanna at IFS arranged the shipping of my bike

in a crate which was jam-packed full of test parts, spares, tools, riding kit and gear. It takes around 10 days to get it from my workshop door in Ireland to my friend's workshop door in America. Customs in LA is the hardest part to get through and again IFS take care of that for me.

I booked my flights for LA through my friend Stuart Bell who is a pilot on the British Airways long haul flights. And with a bit of networking magic through another friend – Matt – we managed to get a full upgrade to first class. Full thanks to those two guys as we received rock star treatment from start to finish

lain actually nearly got

us thrown off the flight for taking pictures after some Z-list celebrity wench gave off some stink after thinking he was going to sell the pictures to a magazine or something. She made lain delete the pictures and gave it large in front of the entire First Class cabin – daft cow!

I had my first hospital visit of the year which I didn't

I had my first hospital visit of the year which I didn't really welcome but this time it wasn't me who was injured. Iain managed to obtain a workshop injury while working on a bike with no rear shock in it. Whatever way he lifted it off the stand he trapped his hand and cut it open right from his knuckles to his wrist. This was the day before we flew to America and he had to get it stitched up and get a course of painkillers and antibiotics to keep him going.

When we arrived in LA I got myself downtown to an RV rental agency and took on a Funmover motorhome for a month. We've been living in it and with the huge workshop in the back lain can prep and maintain the Honda easily in there. She runs on petrol and with a V10 motor it's possibly the thirstiest wagon I've ever been in. It takes 120 dollars to fill the tank and so far I've clocked up around 1,500 miles. I've had to get a part-time job flipping Big Macs in McDonalds to pay for the fuel bill – just kiddin'.

I got out on the bike pretty much the first day we arrived

and rode at Glen Helen until dark. I hadn't been on a dry track in quite a few months so I enjoyed every lap. After a week or so of riding I started testing some parts that we'd brought over in our crate and even though it takes up so much time it's worth every minute.

We'll be using Showa kit suspension this year but it doesn't arrive in Britain until late February and I would prefer to have a good base setting long before then. Stevie Martin kindly helped me out by letting me borrow his 2005 Showa kit suspension and I've been riding with that out here. This means we can dial it in ourselves to what works best for me on the track and then we can get back to the

UK and transfer it to the new equipment. Cheers Stevie!

Peter Dickson of
Bridgestone arranged for me
to do some tyre testing out
here too and it's worked out
very well. Bubba, Reed and
Carmichael all use
Bridgestone tyres and the
driver for the Race Event
service truck is actually a full
blown Irish lad from Dublin –
he's even ginger! De luck of
de Oirish I tell ye!

I met up with Mike Brown for lunch one day when we didn't ride and talked about going cycling together but to be honest I reckon he'd kill me on the bicycle as he's really into cycling in a big way.

The days I haven't been riding I go training at my friend Al's house. He's an

ex-ATV champion and runs a business called CT Racing. I met him through Justin Reid and we've been pals ever since. His house has a gym and he lives in a part of LA which is very hilly so mountainbiking and running is fantastic from his place. He's got a great workshop with all the machining tools you'd ever need and a dyno for testing the motor. He's helped me out a lot getting the engine running good out here.

I've spotted a few familiar faces while I've been out here including my old team-mates Yoshi Atsuta and Jussi Vehvilainen who are both pals of mine. On a few occasions we've met up at some tracks and put some laps in together.

Marc De Reuver is here also and off the bike he's a really funny guy. He could take the title this year if he stays healthy long enough to see the end of the season but in the past it's just never worked out like that for him. I wish him good luck!

Okay, I reckon I've yakked on enough about me, me, me for one month so I'm gonna fax this off to Mr Lawless and head back to the track to get on with my job! Thanks for reading, I'll see you all at Hawkstone.

Words by Gordon Crockard Photo by Sutty

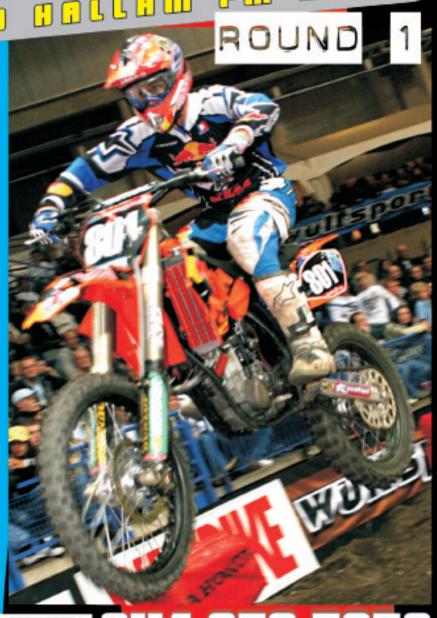




SUPERCROSS







0114 256 5656

FRI, 25TH AND SAT, 26TH OF JANUARY LIVERPOOL ECHO ARENA Saturday, 1st of March London Wembley Arena "Next week I'm heading off to Italy to see some sponsors and to ride in the Hell's Gate race...I didn't believe how much work there was involved in preparing for these extreme events - fair play to Knighter as he must have spent months getting a good set up"

In the Dark

Paul struggles with night vision at The KTM Tough One so it's time to pull his finger out and get lit up for Hell's Gate



THE ENDURO season has already started and the usual controversy that goes with it has started too. It will be a long year and I'm sure we will stop the critics in their tracks one way or another!

As most of you are aware the recent Tough One didn't quite go according to plan and after a few offs and a few upside-down moments I decided I just was not tough enough! Anyway, I must say that it was a great event and if I had fitted good lights I'm sure things would have been different.

It was good to see a big crowd supporting off-road sport and giving both riders and promoters something to look forward to. At the moment though I'm putting all that behind me and moving forward and preparing for this year. Right now I'm trying to ride as much as possible and keep out of the shop other than Mondays and Fridays – the rest of the week I'm out skiving and riding the lovely CR250 two-stroke.

The plan for now is to race the first WEC then the Fast Eddys, BEC and WOR races. It's not looking likely I'll be racing in America this year as I haven't been contacted about any deals. So for now if we go back there to race it will be for fun and when we have time.

The Fast Eddy front is looking good, entries are now out and venues are almost all decided. This weekend I'm planning to ride a local MX at Wilden Lane where I raced at the beginning of January. I must say that it was a great

event and three good races without any hassles – literally turn up, pay your money and ride. Well done Tom!

Next week I'm heading off to Italy to see some sponsors and to ride in the Hell's Gate race. I know that we should be prepared a lot better as I'm getting a lot of help from Steve Plain and Ian in organising and making sure we have got lights that I can see with.

I'm starting testing for the race this weekend, doing some night riding and machine preparation as well as testing some lights that go on the helmet. I didn't believe how much work there was involved in preparing for these extreme events – fair play to Knighter as he must have spent months getting a good set up.

I'm sure we'll come good in the end. I now have the '06 CR250s which have had some small improvement over the '05 model – the main thing being the longer silencer which has helped smooth out the power. The rest of the bike will be the same set up as '05 with K-Tech suspension mods, small engine work and all the trick parts robbed from the shop!

That's pretty much it for now other than I've got to get my ass down the gym and do some work as it's too damn cold to go riding at the moment.

See you at the races...

Words by Paul Edmondson Photo by Jonty Edmunds





"On this island road racers are legends...so to win an award of this nature gives credit to the achievements of Martin and the **MX f**raternity who rarely get talked about in the same breath as their Tarmac compatriots"

And the winner is...

...Martin Barr who comes away from the Irish annual awards with a fistful of silverware

NO BIG surprise that Martin Barr lifted the Irish Racer award for MX rider of the year seeing as the Dixon/Bike-it youngster made both national and international headlines.

What was exceptional though to both Martin and motocross in general is that one of the most prestigious awards – for the young rider of the year – was also awarded to him! Now the significance of a motocross rider winning this award is enormous.

On this island road racers are legends and we have currently such a talented presence at British Super Bike level with the Lavertys and Jonny Rea etc. So to win an award of this nature – which is decided by a 10-man panel from within the industry and media – gives credit to the achievements of Martin and the MX fraternity who rarely get talked about in the same breath as their Tarmac compatriots.

Speaking of legends, it was without a doubt one of the highlights of the awards evening to have none other than three-time world champ Dave Thorpe present the MX rider of the year awards. Second behind Martin was Phil McCullough – despite not winning a championship in 2005. The Ballymena charger always stirs up passion and one of his best rides ever was at Ballykelly last season when – after a crash – he remounted, fixed himself and charged from dead last to take a monumental victory. That sort of performance – and the fact that '05 was his comeback season after what would have been to many riders a career ending injury – would have added a few votes from the judges.

Robert Hamilton was voted third following a successful season that saw him win the Ulster title although internal club politics were to play a part in taking his national crown away from the sprightly 17-year-old.

Pre-season practice is in full swing and while the superstars are practising at secret locations throughout Europe, the clubman racers are doing their best to trash their 2006 machines before a wheel is turned in earnest.

Ulstermotocross.com is full of the 'which colour is best' and horror stories of £5000 machines reduced to scrap as the odd four-stroker throws its dummy out of the pram. Now I don't believe that any of the manufacturers produce a bike that's designed to implode during its lifetime. The fact that this indeed does happen on occasion is mainly due to maintenance – or rather the lack of it. Then there's the fact that we tend to look for ways to make already fast machines even faster which in turn will have a direct bearing on the reliability issue.

If you're desperate to get rid of some of your hard-earned cash in order to improve your lap times then get your suspension set up and put a new tyre on when it is needed. It's a simple enough theory – if your machine is bouncing about like a Lotto winning Donkey you'll be hard pressed to make that pass stick. And it won't matter if you have a factory engine if you're running slicks!

News of the demise of two-strokes may have been a little premature. Paddock talk is that DG Williamson rider Tommy Merton was seen practising on a 125cc Yamaha – will this mean a return to the tiddler for Tommy in the Irish/Ulster MX2 championships?



GOMX/Russell's rider Luke Wilde will run 125/250cc two-stroke Suzuki machines in his rookie season while team-mate Robert Hamilton is considering riding a 125 and 450F Yamaha in the Irish title chase.

And then there is Adam Lyons. What's Adam going to be up to this season? All I can say is watch this space (which means you haven't got a feckin' clue – SL)...

Moto-One teamsters McC and Wayne Garrett have been clocking up the miles on their KTM 250F machines and the word is that Wayne is flying! Not at all surprising as on his day Wayne's the fastest rider in the country but it's a long way to go until the final Irish national round on September 17.

Gordon Crockard is well into his preparations for what will be a tough return to top level competition but the three-time British champ is hungry to regain his place at the top. Fast becoming the premier series in Europe, the British title will be hotly-contested in 2006.

GC has the talent and burning ambition – although in some quarters of the British off-road press Gordy appears to have been written off. Well, those that know him know this is the best form of motivation available for the Newtownards man – we all remember when GC went from zero to hero.

The release of championship dates has been met with the usual moaning by some – although it must be said that the majority have welcomed the effort that has been made by the MRA to ensure that the Irish and Ulster series will get to visit most of the circuits available.

And it's good to see the famous Tinkerhill venue returning to the

And it's good to see the famous Tinkerhill venue returning to the championship calendar – the popular hardpack track just outside Newry always generates one of the largest crowds of the season.

Words by Stevie Mills Photo by Sutty





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Comic query

Hi my name is Josh and I ride an XR100R. I've been reading your magazine for two years now ever since my friend got me the June '03 issue and I like it. Boy Hardy is my favourite page but I've been wondering if things ever go right for him and Bob.

Josh, via email

Of course things go right for them occasionally - if you check your past issues I'm sure you'll find the boy has won an odd race or two and picked up some very lucrative sponsorship deals!

Get well Dan!

A very big get well soon to Eastern Centre rider Daniel Noman who is likely to be spending a long period of time in hospital due to an horrific crash which led to major injuries.

It's feared that Daniel could be in hospital between 16 and 20 weeks. Daniel is currently in the James Padget Hospital in Great Yarmouth and is very bored so please drop on by and give him some support.

We'd also like to say a big thank you to all that helped on the track in keeping Dan safe from other riders. Once again, get well

Steven Wall. Chris Place and all of the **Eastern Centre crew**

And a great big DBR get well soon from everyone in the office!

Tiny tests

After riding motocross for many years I've had to retire through all the injuries I've picked up but my passion for the sport lives on and is now shared by my 10-year-old son Josh who is racing his first season this year with the YMSA.

You guvs put together a well presented mag covering the MX and youth scene with Rage but I want more! You do excellent bike tests but you don't cover the 65cc and 85cc bikes. Do you realise how many kids buy your magazine and how many parents scratch their heads each year wondering which bike has the advantage (if any)? It would be great if you could do a 65 and 85cc shoot out with the Japanese bikes and the orange one from Austria.

Andy, Yorkshire

We agree it's something DBR should definitely look into - it's just a matter of getting our midget test team and some bikes together.

Fan mail!

I've not been on a motocross bike for over 10 years but the man who rode the #661 Kawasaki at the Cardiff supercross has made me want to start riding again. I had a read through Mr Walker's story in February's DBR and what he said and what I saw from the crowd didn't quite match up.

In your letters page last month it said that Mr Walker had been 'training hard' - at McDonalds maybe? Every time I buy DBR Mr Walker is in there riding bikes so my lad and I expected him to be fairly fit looking and quick. What we actually witnessed was a portly bloke riding around at the back turning in lap times the autos would be ashamed of.

I used to race big meetings with no support every week (notice all the people who supported Mr Walker at the end of Feb's column). I will race the next Cardiff SX if Walker rides it again to prove that I could put in a better performance than him - if he was injured or not - even though I've not raced for 10 years.

Name withheld, South Wales

If you're too chicken to admit who you are in your letter we reckon you'll be way too chicken to turn up and actually race the Cardiff SX. Have you never heard the phrase 'don't hate - congratulate'?

DVD Disaster!

Right. Just reading DBR and very fine it is too but you've hit a helmet popping nerve and I've just got to scream at someone so I'm letting the messenger have it - throttle pinned.

I'm referring to Dawg's Paced review. I bought it as a late Christmas present to myself cause no matter how many times I pointed it out on the bike store's shelves, picked it up, showed it to her and said "I'd like this for Christmas" she thought I'd prefer a pair of YSL boxers and some freakin' hair gel.

So I've got it home, unwrapped it and popped it in the DVD player faster than Geoff Walker attempting a triple jump in Wales. Let's face it, it's the off-season and outside it looks something like last year's Anaheim 1 but without the bikes. It's cold and wet and we numbskull dirt biking types need some fodder to crank us through to the never never land of outdoor antics before we soil our new YSL pants in an effort to do something interesting.

So I wait for Paced to start - it's only a DVD but it will help me through. Then it happens, the narrator speaks. Within minutes the pants are full and the will to live has been drawn through my brain like dust through a badly prepped air filter. It's nothing short of a crime.

The commentary is more depressing than fitting yer oil filter back to front in yer spanking 250F and the resulting bank balance (I just know, okay). This one should be investigated by the Scrambling Police and the guilty party hung by the hairy boys until a full apology to each and every punter is made out in blood. The guy is comatose. He is to motocross what icebergs were to the Titanic. What makes it even more upsetting is the rest of the film is excellent.

The comment about replacing the narrator with Swamp Thing from TGO 2 is more right on than lettuce juice and sunflower seeds. 'Thing' may be a boy cow's dingle dangle but he captures the balls-out mind-squelching smoke, noise and guts adrenaline fix that is motocross.

So Paced was ripped from the DVD player in a fit of disgust and replaced with the closest thing I could get my hands on - does anybody know how to retrieve a more than filthy pair of posh pants from a play back appliance?

Townley, I hold you responsible. Disgusted, Tunbridge Wells

Before you try and prise your crusty pants from the DVD player we suggest you unplug it from the wall. Remember kids - safety first!

Mistaken identity

Sutty, what's the crack with that photo? It's not even me ya ****er!

Glen, South Wales

No ***t Sherlock! You gotta admit though that the little ice-lolly licker sure does look a lot like you.



LETTERSWINDRIZES

It's the kinda deal known in the trade as a double bonus! Write to Rant, get your letter published and you'll win a one-litre trigger bottle of marvellous bike cleaning fluid Muc-Off. And if we rate your letter highly enough you'll also receive our monthly star prize - a super-sized Shoei kitbag! It's a win-win thing...





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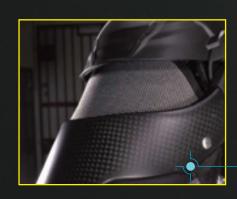
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Homeward bound

After a long and glittering pro career banging bars and bashing his body at the sharp end of the British and world MX championships, Paul Cooper's finally calling it a day and 'retiring' to his native South Africa – we're going to miss him...

Words by Jonathan Bentman Photos by Redeye



the photoshoot reinforces the sense of disbelief that we really have seen the last of Cooperman in British motocross. For a rider going on 35 years of age (not yet, in August) and with 15 years of international racing under his belt he looks remarkably upright and fit — youthful in fact. There's no limp, his shoulders sit square and there's alert crystal clarity in his eyes. And there's this curious mix of sensitivity and robustness. This is not a man past his prime so surely it's too soon to be talking retirement?

But when he strips off his shirt for the shoot

But when he strips off his shirt for the shoot I can see there are lines that betray the truth. Scars run like train tracks down every limb and even slash across his torso at random intervals. His right bicep is part withered. Yet even now – and for all the scars – this is very much the body of a supreme athlete. Cooperman has

never been a slacker and heading for what will be two pre-retirement years racing in South Africa he still trains and rides to the same level as a GP racer. He is nothing if not professional.

Of course, it's an incredibly difficult task to try and draw a complete picture of Cooper the motocross racer. The career is so long and peppered with so many events – both good and bad – that no one aspect, no one event can be selected to define the man. And such is the depth to Cooper, certainly no one result can stand as a defining moment.

There was of course that runner-up finish at the British GP at Foxhill in 1999 and another podium in Belgium a season later, a time when Cooper looked to be at the height of his powers. Yet he won a British championship as far back as 1993 and as recently as 2002. And

PAUL COOPER'S story is not one of mercurial, almost supernatural talent. And it's not one of a small-town boy made good (although it comes close). Nor is it a story of a man cut down in his prime. Most definitely Cooperman's story is no pulp fiction page-turner.

Firmly planted in reality, it's about hard graft, about crafting race skills, building championships, about being the best rider that he could be. It's also about maintaining a professional career with results that would delight sponsors while carrying injuries that would slay a lesser man. And it is thankfully about coming out the other end and reaching retirement with the pride and dignity of a warrior who fought with honour and won accolades richly deserved.

Meeting Coops at a Yorkshire warehouse for



championship celebrations, so many times it's been Cooperman who's been the rider who's pushed them all the way to the wire.

Ever the realist, Coops knows exactly how he got to run with such stellar names. "I think as a rider I'm part natural, part learnt. There are certain riders out there we call very, very talented - Robbie Herring, Jean Michel Bayle, Jeremy McGrath - but I've got a different take on it. They do have natural talent but I believe it comes from doing the right kind of practising. How they learnt when growing up, by doing the right things, honing the skills.

"I definitely cannot be classed as one of those talented riders. I think I've got a little of the technical ability and I tried to practice as

Cooper started racing when he was nine and although he never collected any championships back in South Africa he could on his day mix it with the likes of Greg Albertyn. Keen to see if he could make a professional career from the sport, Cooper elected to come to England as with an English father - and so a British passport - and with relations in the UK he could see he could establish a foothold to build toward the world championships. He yearned to race in America but real world practicalities and no money meant it was Europe for him.

Even then Cooper had to overcome setbacks as he severely broke both wrists in his final junior year. And when we say severely, we can count bone grafts and dying on the

part of that journey. So Cooper was in fact 20 years old by the time he'd recuperated (or re-cooper-ated perhaps - something Cooper would do many times over in his career) and trained himself back up to strength and speed.

Mike Carter at Husky Sport gave Cooper his break, allowing him a trial and then signing him for his first season. Although the partnership wasn't successful, it got Cooper started and by his second season Cooper had picked up a bike and parts deal with Yamaha. After that season Cooper rose to a fully supported deal which he repaid with his first British championship in the 125s.

These were the days when riders were happy to race 125, 250 and Open championships and Cooper was also third

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in the 250s and fifth in the Open in that same year. Success didn't

"It was a lot harder than I thought. I thought with starting to win championships I'd start to earn money. But it wasn't quite like that, I had to live very frugally and there's no way I could have done it without my parents. Not so much financially – they didn't have the money - but the support came with cooking and cleaning and all the day to day matters.

Despite having snapped his ACL in 1992 Cooper continued to race on and in '94 he finished runner-up to Kurt Nicoll before rising to be Open and Superclass champion in 1995 – effectively a double championship. His joy lasted barely a month - then he snapped his right wrist at a supercross.



The repair required an exoskeleton and after what we can only describe as a 'surfing complication' the injury didn't heal until three weeks before the new season. With a change from Honda to Kawasaki coming at the same

Coops' working relationship with Sooty and Sweep ended abruptly

time it left him under-prepared for the following season. Typically Cooper though, he fought back and was runner-up by the end of the year.

At this point we can leave the matter of the British championships for a while. The fact is Cooper had plateau'd in the British series and over the next half-decade he would be rupper-up four times and third once

runner-up four times and third once.

What we can do now is look at Cooper and the GPs. For here is the paradox. For all Cooper's success in the UK, there seems to be no corresponding upturn in fortunes at the GPs. He qualified and earned points in '92 – his very first year in GPs – but his progress from a regular qualifier to regular points scorer to top-10 finisher was clearly a struggle and the transition from top-10 to top-five and then top-three seems to be agonisingly tough. After years of trying he briefly peaked in 1999 and 2000 but after that it slipped away again.

"Being consistent in GPs has always been elusive," shrugs Coops. "One factor is that every time I got injured it impacted more on GPs than on the British championship. There are only eight British rounds and they're spread out with month gaps but GPs can come three at a time. So a four-week lay-off could really make a difference to a GP championship push compared to the British championship.

"And with me always doing well in the British it was always the case 1d miss a few GPs to be fit for the British. So it's a possibility that the dual focus cost me.

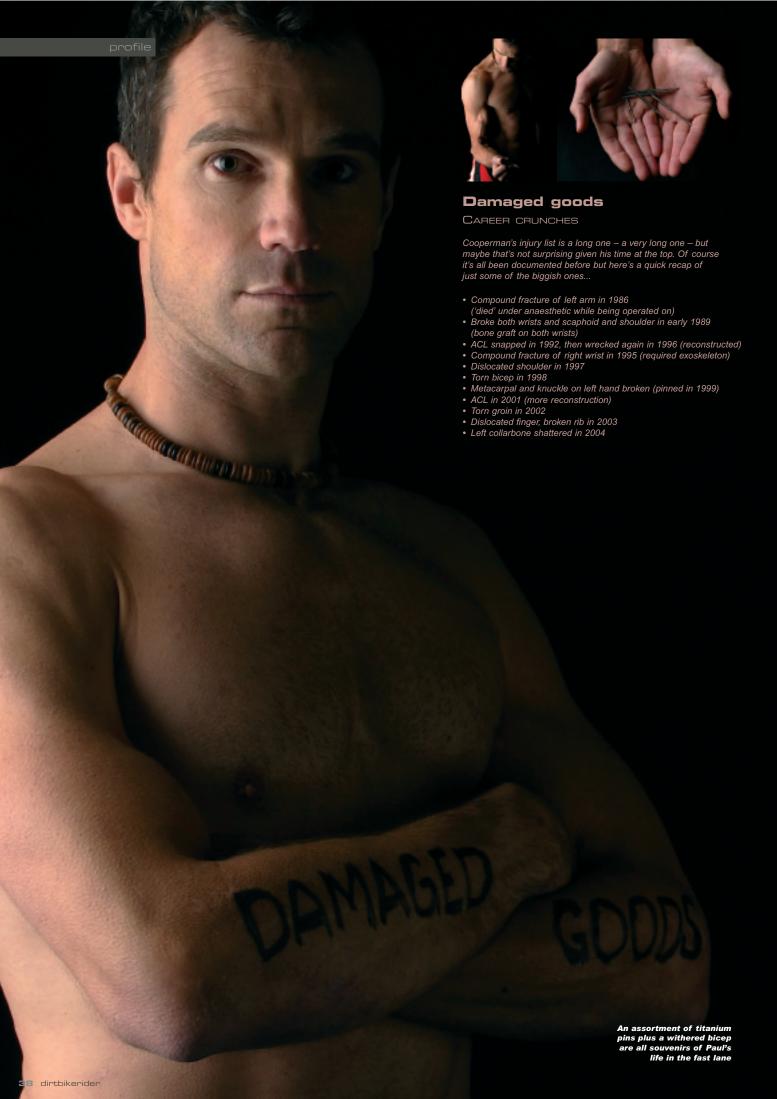
But Cooper is grounded enough to admit that it was more than just injury or bad luck that denied him world championship glories. "I was definitely searching for the edge in 1996-'98



and I went very, very extreme with the nutritional side of things, with fitness. At that time I couldn't get a top-five consistently and I was really trying to find that next level and I was sort of looking everywhere for it. I think I actually went through a stage of doing myself more harm than good because I was trying different diets and types of training – all of it off my own back – and it wasn't helping.

"Then in 1999 I made a big change. I cut

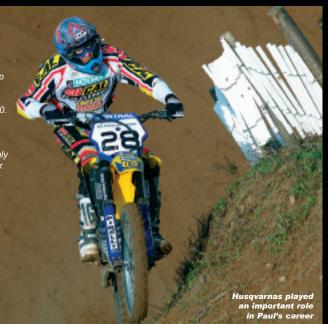
"Then in 1999 I made a big change. I cut back a lot on my training and concentrated more on my riding. And it went very well – I had my high point at the GP at Foxhill when I



Weapons of choice

COOPS' FAVOURITES

"It's a short list. My championship winning 1995 Honda CR250. Trevor's still got one of those Then my 2000 Husqvarna CR250. And my championship winning Honda CR250 of 2002. Harry let me keep that one as a championship bonus – it's the only bike I have from my whole career And my mechanic Steve Payne's restored it to full glory as well. And for pure performance the 2005 Honda CRF450, the best



was second. But three weeks later I broke my hand and knocked myself out. And I tried to come back straight away when I was injured. And that didn't work.

"I met up with my trainer Stephan Nusser for the next season and that brought me on. It felt right – it was professional to get the training side sorted, to hand over the responsibility and to know we were doing it right.

"It was the second year with Husqvarna and we got more professional too. I was asking for developments and getting them, we did a lot of testing and the team was focussed and brilliant. I got another GP podium and a lot of fourth places, missing out on podiums by the smallest of margins

"As well as doing well in GPs my British results were going well too. I was having a real battle with Gordon Crockard but unfortunate mechanical mishaps were costing me too many points. It came down to the last round at Farleigh Castle. And it looked good, I had a good lead in the first moto when the crank broke. And that was that. I came back and despite more mechanical problems finished second in the second then won the final moto.

But by then the championship was Gordon's. "Losing that championship was the hardest loss for me. It was very, very difficult for the whole team. We'd worked two years for that championship with the first year being a full development year and so it was a huge knock back for all of us. It took a long time to get over it."

But let's get back to the GPs for a moment as Coops isn't finished on that particular subject.

"I used to question myself a lot, every season, trying to understand why I wasn't getting the results. At the beginning, yes, I wasn't mature enough to know what I needed in set-up, what would suit me - and there were times I wasn't assertive enough. I never said 'this is what I want'. And there were the injuries

"But there's self-belief too. That is a big thing, the confidence. I think that's a big, big part of the puzzle. I think there's something in me, in my background, my make-up, that's maybe a bit underdog. As an athlete, in any sport, you have to be able to shut your mind off to any doubts you have and focus on the belief you are going to win. I used to read about it and I used to try and practice it but it didn't come natural.

There are certain people, like Greg Albertyn, where it does come natural where they have this incredibly strong self-belief, they simply can't believe they won't win. Grant Langston was like that too. And so you need that, then you need to make the right decisions,

"Harry Ainsworth (at CAS Honda) was important too. He came to me at a tough time and obviously gave me my last championship. He was very different to Trevor but with him too there was something more to the relationship. I remember travelling together to the MXdN in 2000 and we talked the whole way but not once about motocross.

Yeah, two very different guys but they were both very passionate about what they were doing and so made a huge difference for me. I think as a rider you need to have a mechanic, or a trainer or a boss who will be there right alongside you to achieve the common goal you always get better results like that. With Trevor and Harry I had that, they brought a depth to what we did, they were special."

For now though the future lies in South Africa with two seasons racing the South African championship under the Fox Campbell Kawasaki awning. In a sense it's full circle -Russell Campbell and his team were the guys who set Cooper on his way to Europe at the outset in 1990.

But it's by no means goodbye to the UK. After 15 years in the UK – and with his English dad - he feels as home here as in his native country and he has fantastic friends in both. And that's very much Cooperman. He's no social butterfly but he holds dear those that he



to do the right things. Maybe there are other people who have that and don't make it but certainly a lot of the guys who do make it most certainly are like that. A self-belief that's almost delusional.

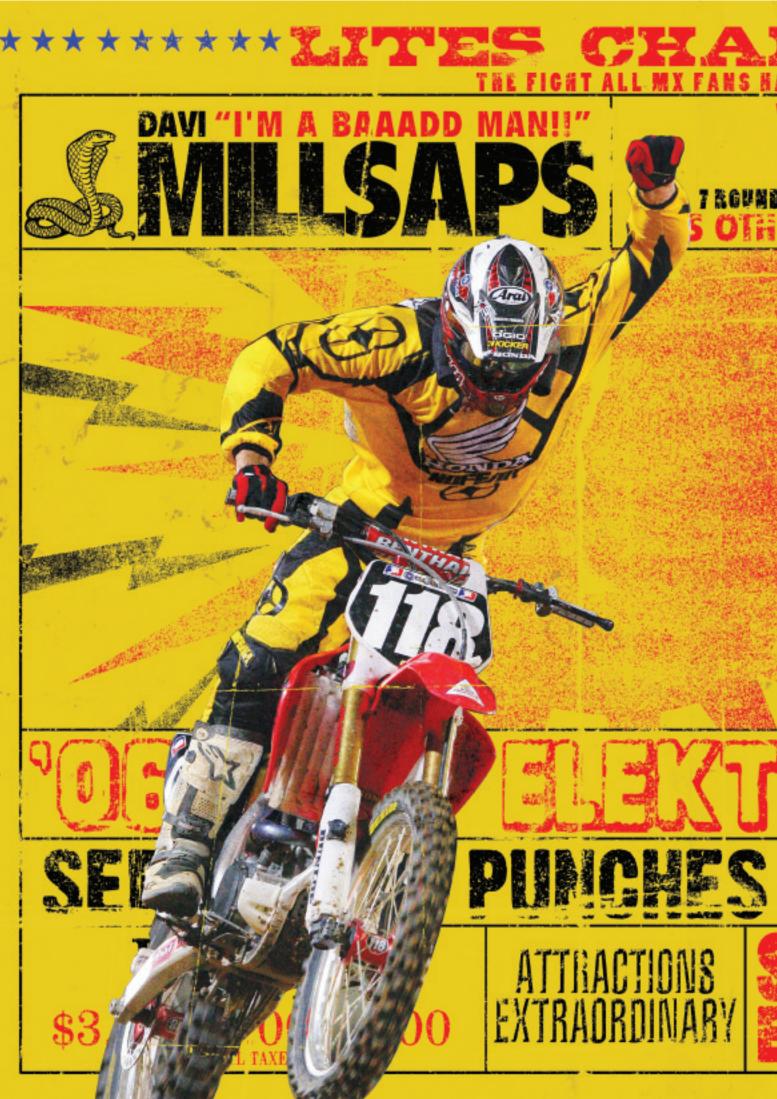
Looking back over his career Cooper acknowledges there were some pivotal relationships made along the way. The first being that with Mike Carter at Husqvarna who gave him his first chance and obviously was there in '99 and Y2K. But, of course, the big, partnership was with Trevor Avery - Cooper's team manager for more than half his career.

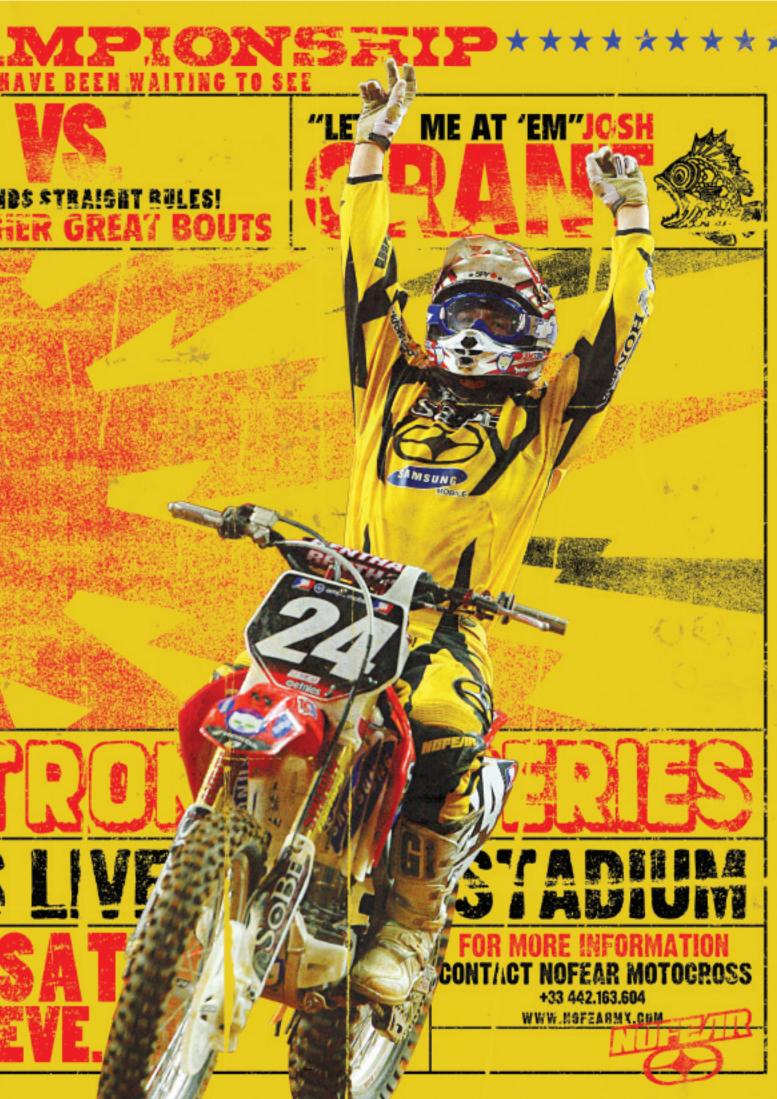
I clicked with Trevor I think because we truly had common goals in racing. He must have liked the way I applied myself and I liked the way he always did what he said he was going to do. But more than that we genuinely got on, like friends. We really enjoyed the times when we travelled together to the races - we always had an absolute blast, would have really, really good weekends as friends would. The weekends when we didn't travel together, or maybe he stayed home, they weren't anywhere near

likes. And he's no super-talented racer, yet he extracted more from his racing than many he'd readily admit were far greater talents. He fought with heart and dedication.

Yes, the Cooperman raced here. And we are privileged to be witnesses.













AS ENDURO 3 World Champion, AMA Endurocross Champion, overall winner of the 80th International Six Days Enduro and having topped the podium at countless extreme and indoor events in '05, you'd have thought David Knight could afford to take things a little easy as he prepares to defend his world title. He is after all the fastest enduro rider in the world at present.

But relaxing simply isn't Knighter's style. Knowing that he can't afford to rest on his laurels, the factory KTM rider is aware that '06 is going to be every bit as challenging as '05 was. Not because his rivals have dramatically raised their game (and even if they have Knighter won't know until the opening round of the WEC series) but because having won nearly everything there was to win during '05, to improve his results he will need to win every race he enters in '06. Not most of the races. All of them! Even for a rider of Knighter's abilities that's asking one hell of a lot.

'I know it's going to be hard to do better this year than I did in '05 because last year was such a great season for me," admits Knighter, "but that's my focus for the season - to try and win every round of the world championship. It would be great to win all the extreme and indoor events I enter as well but I really want to win all 16 days of the world championship. It won't be easy and defending my Enduro 3 title disappointed if I don't win every day but I want to go one better than I did last year. I want to try and have a perfect season.'

Going one better in '06 as Knighter puts it means doing just that - winning one more race than he did in '05. With last year's WEC series having visited nine countries over 18 days of competition, in the Enduro 3 class DK got beaten just once.

'In a way I was relieved as well as a little disappointed that I got beaten on day one in Finland," admits Knight. "Yeah it would have been nice to have won every day of the championship but I was putting a bit too much pressure on myself and starting to worry about it. So many things have to fall into place to win every day of a championship, that's why I know it will be hard this year. But it's what I want to try and do.

'I'm looking at '06 in exactly the same way as I did last year. I believe I can win but I need to be focused now, put the work in and prepare myself as best I can. If I do that then I know I will be ready for the start of the season.

Knighter was quite simply 'the man' last year. Setting himself a gruelling schedule that saw him start racing in early February and spend virtually every weekend competing, David also found time to travel to Africa where he joined the Repsol KTM team as they went through their final preparations for the Dakar Rally.

'What I achieved last season didn't sink in for a while," explains Knighter. "After winning the ISDE I was focused on winning the world championship and after that I was only home for about a week before I went to the US for the Last Man Standing and Endurocross. Straight after that I went to Africa and then it was almost Christmas.

"I guess it really sunk in at a Ramsey MCC presentation in Douglas, just before Christmas. I was awarded a Manx Sword of State and loads of friends and family were there along with government members.'

So looking back at a season full of success is it possible to pick one moment, ahead of all others, as the highlight of the year? "There were several," points out Knighter, "not just one. Winning the ISDE outright was very special, as was winning my first world title and being a part of what was an incredible season for KTM's enduro team. Winning the Endurocross







Qualifying 9.30am First Race 12.30pm Admission £20 Concessions Under 14 Free

















after getting beaten last year also meant a lot. And winning the Erzberg Rodeo in front of all the KTM bosses and beating Juha Salminen there was also another highlight. The whole season was great, it's hard to pick just one moment.

As David prepares himself for the extreme and indoor events that kick off the '06 season he knows that all eyes will be on him and his team-mates Ivan Cervantes and Samuli Aro come the start of the world championship. The reason? Together, as reigning world champions, they head the new-look KTM Enduro Factory Team Farioli squad. With the KTM Enduro Factory Team now defunct, the incorporation of Aro and Knighter's class-mate and closest rival Marko Tarkkala in the Farioli-run team is something that doesn't worry David.

"I don't see that things are going to be much different," offers Knighter. "There'll be a few more riders in the team but I don't worry about my team-mates too much - I just get on and do my own thing. Fabio the team manager and Alex the team co-ordinator will have everything well sorted, I'm just going to focus on doing what I have to do."

But when the opening round of the '06 World Enduro Championship finally rolls around in mid March it will be a very different event to the traditional southern European season openers of past years in Spain or Portugal. Taking place in the frozen north of Sweden, the event will be the first winter enduro in the 16-year history of the WEC. Requiring riders to use studded tyres as they race around the

frozen lake in Ostersund, the event will also mark the start of the first truly international world championship series.

The Swedish event is going to be a one-off it should be great fun but the season will start properly in Spain six weeks later," explains David. "Obviously my aim is to win in Sweden but it's certainly going to play into the hands of the Scandinavian riders. Whatever happens in Sweden it's in Spain and Portugal that I'll really start to push hard, to try and start opening up a lead in the championship.'

With the second, third and fourth rounds of the series taking place in southern Europe the championship then crosses the Atlantic for the first time ever, stopping off in Canada and the US for rounds five and six. With little known about the events the chance to compete in 'proper enduros' in the US is something Knighter is looking forward to.

"I think it's great that the series is going to new places and that the US public and press will be able to see how we do things in Europe. I'm sure both events will be as good as the ones we have in Europe. The events come at an important time of year as whoever is leading the world championship classes after those events will probably go on to win the titles.

While Knighter is certain to race in the US at least once in '06 it's looking likely that he will make many more visits there in '07 to compete in the US GNCC series, rather than the WEC. Having shown the US motorcycle industry, public and press exactly what he is capable of by winning the Last Man Standing and

Endurocross events last year - as well as placing fourth in the final round of the GNCC series a couple of seasons ago - Knighter isn't thinking about '07 just yet and the likelihood of racing in the States. Instead he remains focused on the job in hand - retaining his Enduro 3 world championship.

"I'm not thinking about '07 too much yet, I have another world title to win first. Juha will be coming back to Europe to race at the end of this year and as I've said before I'd love to race in the US if I got the chance. It depends on a number of things but I probably will race in the States in '07. I have a lot of races to get through before then, I'll know more in the middle of the season.

So with such a packed programme does Knighter expect it to be harder to defend his championship than it was to win it in the first place?

"It won't be easy, competing at world championship level never is," David points out. "Having never won a world title before last year I have no idea if it will be harder to defend it. I know I will be expected to win which doesn't bother me too much but I am also more experienced and every bit as determined to win. I think it all comes down to preparation.

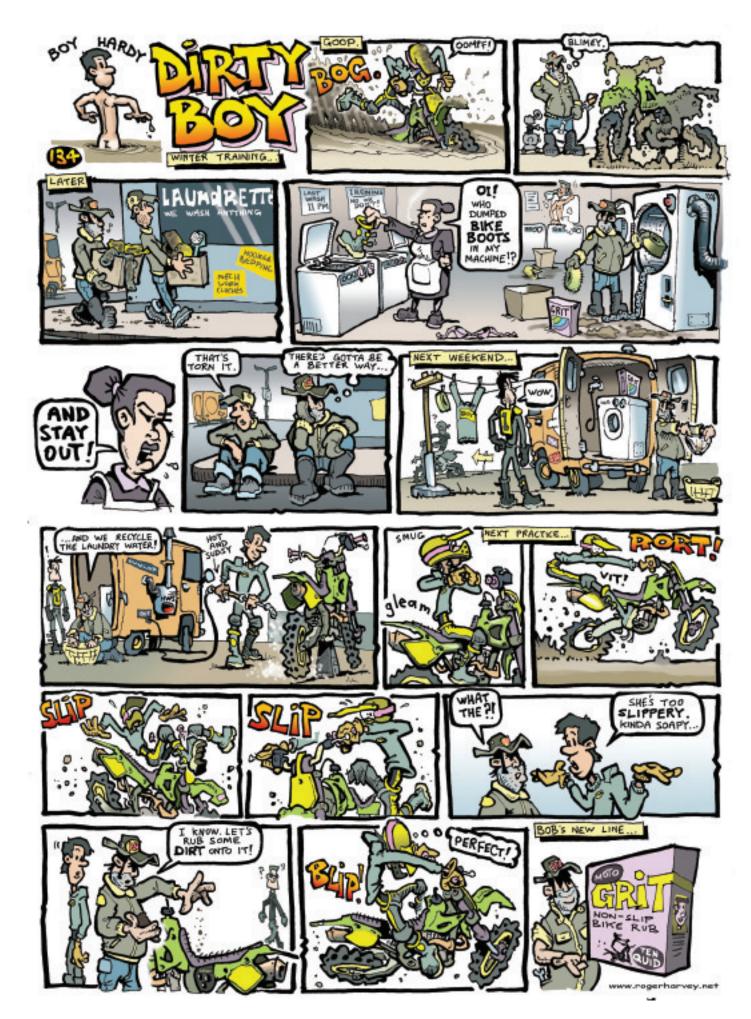
"I don't have any new rivals for '06 so the riders trying to beat me will be the same riders that I raced against last year – '06 is a new season so I can't assume that because I beat them last year I will automatically beat them again this year. Yes, I'm confident I can win but I have to prove that I am the best again.















Clarky's on home Yaaarkshire turf where he gets his mitts on the '06 range of Rev-3s

Words by Dan Clark Photos by Sutty



BETA HAVE had a fairly successful year with James Dabill taking the 2005 Junior World Championship on his Rev-3 while Spanish young gun Toni Bou wowed the Sheffield crowd with a come-from-behind win in the opening round of the WITC on his. There's no hiding the fact that these bikes perform well on the world stage – the bikes perform for British trials enthusiasts is can Beta do the business at club and national level over here in the LIK

and national level over here in the UK. With a bevy of 2006 Betas ready to be put through their paces we hooked up with our intrepid trials tester Dan Clark in some dank, dark woods to put the 125, 200, 250 and 270 Rev-3s to the test in typical British trials going – yup, dank, dark woods. Nice! Over to you oh Danny boy... "The 2006 Betas have some slight aesthetic

"The 2006 Betas have some slight aesthetic changes from the '05 model [and so does Clarky – yes, he's even balder and uglier than ever] and I still reckon they're great looking bikes. The changes include a new headlight, rear fender, front disc cover and bold new graphics but the biggest changes will go unnoticed by the human eye. Lower footrests, a new shock absorber and a revised steering head angle should – in theory – help increase rideability and performance.

"Powerwise the 125 has a new cylinder, cylinderhead, stator/CDI and carburettor, settings while the 200/250/270 models get a new cylinder with cranke as induction which has been modified to make the engine run much cleaner and more responsive.

"Another bit of good news for Beta owners

Another bit of good news for Beta owners is the filment of a revised stator. The stator has been a bit troublesome in the past but I'm assured the new part should remain trouble free.

'Anyway, on with the riding. I'm gonna be selfish and start with the 250 Rev-3 which perennially is by far my favourite of the bunch. The first thing you notice when you get on the bike is that the footpegs do feel lower and a little bit further back which actually belos you get back and find grip when you need it. The other big change is the angle of the steering head which helps when turning tightly.

"The way the motor delivers its power helps you find much needed grip too. It pulls hard

you find much needed grip too. It pulls hard and strong right from the bottom and keeps on pulling smoothly right through the range. It feels like it will do anything you ask of it without pulling your arms out. It's definitely helped by the jetting which seems to be spot on with no nasty flat spots or bogging.

"As a package the suspension works brilliantly with the bike feeling equally comfortable in low speed river beds or when hitting big rock steps. The suspension generally

hitting big rock steps. The suspension generally offers a balanced and controlled feel and the bike doesn't ping off anything which is always

a bonus.

"Stopping the bike is easy enough too with
the space-age looking Grimeca master
cylinders and calipers working in unison to give
controllable, progressive stopping power when
you need it. There's plenty of feedback at the
lever so you're not going to lock up by accident

unless you're some sort of ham-fisted buffoon!
"The 270 shares all the same great features
as the 250 but with a lot more grunt. As soon as you start the engine using the strange feeling left-footed kickstart you can hear the extra bark and as you ride it you can feel the extra bark and as you ride it you can feel the extra power. Knocking it up a gear is a necessity to get the most from this bike in slippery sections as it's very snappy although it is deceptively smooth off the bottom. The power delivery makes this bike more suited for pro niders and WTC riders would not doubt choose it over the 250 but for me it's just way too powerful and I feel most riders would benefit from the more manageable 250.



Introducing the MOHPH knee brace from





"The 125 is a big step down from the 270 in engine size but don't be fooled into thinking this bike is a gutless wonder. The engine feels really zippy but it's surprising just how much torque it packs — it pulls me around nicely and I'm a fair bit heavier than your average schoolie 125 user. Again the suspension and brakes are spot on as with all the range.

"The extra 71cc in t'engine denament on

as with all the range.

"The extra 71cc in t'engine department on the 200 makes a massive difference. It's a smashing bike and the power — which doesn't pull your arms out — is lovely. Power delivery is smooth which helps you to find plenty of grip even in the slippiest of sections. It's the extra amount of torque over the 125 that makes all the difference and for a beginner or clubman rider this is a cracking bike."

125

Capacity:
Bore and stroke:
Front suspension:
Front brake:
Rear brake:
Carburettor:
Gearbox:
Wheelbase:

Wheelbase: Seat height: Dry weight:

200

Capacity:
Bore and stroke:
Front suspension:
Rear suspension:
Front brake:
Rear brake:
Carburettor:
Gearhoy: Gearbox: Wheelbase: Seat height: Dry weight:

250

Capacity:
Bore and stroke:
Front suspension:
Front brake:
Front brake:
Carburettor:
Gearbox:
Wheelbase:
Seat height:
Dry weight:

270

Capacity: Capacity:
Bore and stroke:
Front suspension:
Rear suspension:
Front brake:
Rear brake:
Carburettor
Gearbox:
Wheelbase:
Seat height:
Dry weight:

1310mm 660mm 71kg

195cc 64mm x 60.5mm 38mm Paioli (165mm travel) Paioli (175mm travel) 185mm disc 165mm disc Mikuni VM26/208 Siv-sneed

124cc 54mm x 54mm 38mm Paioli (165mm travel) Paioli (175mm travel) 185mm disc 165mm disc Dell'Orto VHST 26 BD Six-speed 4310mm

Six-speed 1310mm 660mm 71kg

Six-speed 1310mm 660mm 72kg

274.5cc 274-360 76nm x 60.5mm 38mm Paioli (165mm travel) Paioli (175mm travel) 185mm disc 165mm disc Mikani VM26/208





In the world of desert racing, the Dakar Rally is the daddy of 'em all – an event where only the toughest survive! For '06 father and son combo Charlie and Eddie Holmes teamed up to try and get Steve Malone to the finish...

AFTER SPENDING the last nine months helping to prepare for Steve Malone's 2006 Dakar attempt I decided to write my own account of the pre-event prep and then the rally itself. But there's one small flaw in my plan – I didn't end up going to Lisbon to start the greatest adventure of my life.

Instead I started another great adventure – her name is Harriet and she was born on January 20. But when times are hard there are always your parents to fall back on. So my dad Charlie was off to Dakar as the spannerman for Steve...

It all started when Steve made the decision to ride the Dakar back in April 2005. He asked me if I wanted to go along and, well, I couldn't really say no – but then news of the aforementioned little Harriet's arrival in nine months time put a stop to that so in came dad and for the next few weeks the research started. The various people we spoke to were very forthcoming and without some of the information we would have really struggled.

Entries have to be in by June so Steve was on his own sorting out the paperwork and legalities. You'd be surprised by the amount of paperwork there is for the Dakar – forget the usual one sheet of A4 for club meetings. For my dad and me there wasn't much to do but once Steve had decided what bike to ride then things got interesting.

The bike decision was a tough one for Steve from the start but past experiences eventually pointed him in the direction of the KTM 660 Rallye – a custom-made mount for the big desert races – so Steve committed and bought Patsy Quick's KTM from last year. Weekly riding sessions commenced for Steve as well as regular trips to the gym so everything was coming together.

When the confirmation of Steve's entry came through the preparation stepped up a gear and we could go ahead and start to organise the assistance package and the rest of the logistics.

The assistance package is as important as the entry itself. There are many ways in which you can approach this – you can join an

assistance crew such as Rally Raid or Patsy's Team Desert Rose for example. If you have your own mechanic they will take them along and provide facilities for the use of the rider and mechanic. You can also buy a complete package where the bike assistance and spares are all inclusive – many people opt to take this route as the preparation is made easier.

As part of Steve's preparation a trip to Morocco was planned for September so the bike was stripped and received a good fettling plus a spanking new paint job and some stickers so she really looked the part. But Morocco was an eye-opener for Steve who found the sand hard going on the 660 due to the bike's weight. After a few modifications it began to handle better but on the Thursday of a week's riding in the desert the engine ground to a halt and that was that.

After riding a 250F for the rest of the week and really enjoying the experience, a seed had been planted in Steve's head which was to flourish into a fully-prepped KTM 525 with all the trimmings. Steve headed home and, with his desert experience prominent in his mind, decided to switch to a KTM 525XC.

The 525 presented a daunting challenge and the level of modifications involved required long hours and a lot of technical knowledge. Luckily, the main bulk of the modification came as a kit from Meca Systems, a French company that specialises in long distance enduro kits and components

So using a bit of personal judgement we fitted the kit along with all the compulsory equipment that was supplied by the organisation and some extra components. Through the short days and long nights of November and December the bike build progressed and at the same time Steve progressed with the logistics, insurance, ACU forms etc...

After a few testing days and final tweaks the bike was ready and so was Steve. Boxing Day soon came around and it was time to say farewell to Steve and dad as they headed off to Lisbon – my part was done!

Over to Charlie for the rest of the tale...







LISBON

Steve and I arrive in Lisbon late on Boxing Day - the rally doesn't start until December 31 and we have a few days to do some final preparations before Steve's allotted scrutineering day of December 29. The excitement and buzz that we experience in Lisbon is awesome - it's worth doing the race just for that part of it.

Scrutineering takes most of a day - we'd be told that it's one of the hardest days of the Dakar experience but the team find it exciting and very well organised. After seven hours the end is reached and we pass the first of our four milestones which are:

- 1) Get through scrutineering
- 2) Get into Africa
- 3) Reach the rest day
- 4) Finish.

STAGE 1

On the morning of the rally nerves are high and Steve has an early start time. The day's stage is only a short one, although longer though than previous years. It is made up from mainly muddy tracks helped along by the rain that's falling - you don't usually associate rain with the Dakar! Steve makes it through the stage and is looking forward to his last night in a normal bed.

STAGE 2

The second stage is similar to the first but this time the rally heads up into hills and over to the coastal port of Malaga in Spain. Steve makes it through the day with no problems.

Things seen today: A 500cc air-cooled XT Yam!

STAGE 3

Steve gets off the boat in Nador and goes straight into stage three after sleeping during the crossing while I head across the Moroccan landscape for 14 hours. The assistance approach we've taken is to join forces with the guys at Rally Raid so I head to the first bivouac with three other crew members in a Land Rover Discovery.

This is Steve's first African stage – mainly rocky tracks and wadis which are dry river beds. The day is average in length - a total of 672km - and heading for Errachidia the competitors have their first experience of dunes. I arrive at the first African bivouac and set up camp, unloading the tent, sleeping bags and kit. Steve pulls in to the bivouac and it's out with the polish and a fresh set of wheels.

Things seen today: 14 VW Touaregs, a Harley Davidson sidecar and the 500 XT Yam!

STAGE 4

The next day we're off to Quarzazate just south of Marrakech – the rally progresses some 639km and the going is getting tough. The assistance route is also totally off-road so it's a long day for all, especially when the home-made extra diesel tank ruptures and there are four mechanics and 60 litres of diesel slopping around in the back.

After removing everything in the car - including the carpets - we add a couple of inches of fresh desert sand, re-pack and head off. When Steve reaches Quarzazate we realise that Mr Sheen isn't up to the Sutty-inspired damage to his bike, done while trying to avoid the terrible dust clouds created by the top cars and trucks as they catch him up.

I'm up all night repairing and polishing - there's nothing worse than setting up your bed and then putting it away without using it.

STAGE 5

Early start for both of us as we head off to Tan Tan and the next bivouac. Steve has a good day with little problems over the 819km stage. Dust and sand are the main challenges.

The Discovery heads over the sand with no problems but the other assistance vehicles are having a few difficulties.



STAGE 6

From Tan Tan the rally heads to Zouerat and into Mauritania. The riders start in the early hours of the morning and have a challenging road journey at night to reach the border and the start of the stage. Again it's a good day for Steve but the clutch master cylinder is weeping (this becomes a problem later on). Still, Steve makes it through and the routine bike polishing resumes along with a fresh drink of oil and new filters

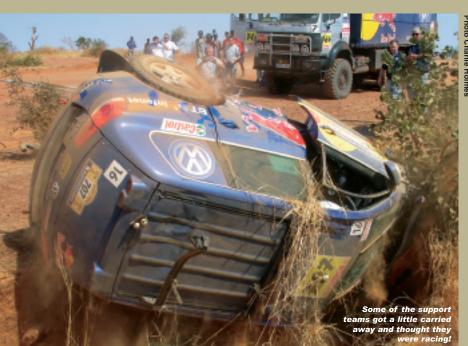
STAGE 7

Leaving Zouerat heading for Atar the rally has a killer day - 521km of mainly sand dunes. Through the wizardry of computers and phones without wires, operations centre Cheshire (our kitchen) tells me that Steve is stopped 85km from the end with no spark. I feel useless and despondent but for Steve it must be worse. All the parts to repair the bike are with me and there's no way to get to him or the bike. This is where I realise that, because of timing, two car mechanics and one bike mechanic in one car do not mix as I want to go one way and they want to go the other!

STAGE 8

So what do I do? Car one way, Steve the other! Around me are people all in the same boat or worse. The start time for today's stage has been extended allowing for people to come in and rest. Stage seven has cut the entry list by a third! With no drive or adrenalin some of us are low.

After 24 hours of sulking I decide to help Tom Classen (South African) and Mick Hughes (Australian) - both riders have paid for assistance but seen little of it. Mick comes in with a look on his face that will stay with me for a while - he's in agony from a broken leg and has just ridden 10km after the fall! Apart from helping him off his bike no more assistance is







REST DAY

Steve should be picked up today after two lonely nights in the desert - picture Tom Hanks in Castaway sat talking to his helmet! Nine months of work down the Swannie. Now Tom has the sole attention of my cloth and polish but does he deserve my luck? First job I do for Tom is the air filter and what do I find? The airbox is full of sand and Tom is saying the engine is making strange noises. A KTM 'engineer' says the engine is okay and a little sand is acceptable - complete b*****s!

Just as we are debating his comments, South African star Alfie Cox and Ralph his mechanic walk by and Alfie's verdict - "that man should be shot with a ball of his own s**t" - seems to say it all.

Tom gets the last spare engine KTM have and at 11am we start to strip and rebuild his bike. By 1.30am the following day he's ready to start on time at 4:30am. During the day Steve catches up with us and it's really good to see him - he tells us that by the time he was picked up he had collected enough camel grass as firewood for two further days and had told them to come back later!

Stage 9

Steve's with me as we watch the start in the dark. Later that day he heads home while I carry on - not what we had planned at the start of our Dakar adventure! That evening Tom's engine's fine but the brakes require some close attention.

Things seen today: Tall young Swedish girl on a quad (quads aren't that boring) and 500cc XT air-cooled Yam.

STAGE 10

The rally pushes on and heads for Mali, next stop Kayes. Tom arrives late but still in the rally. With a large grin he says "I now have brakes and an engine for the first time in the rally". The bike looks very dusty though! By this time the bivouac is half the size it was at the start.

The food is amazing and there's lots of it. Toilet facilities are rush mat walls with a hole in the ground. And there are showers! One bucket of water per person but - health and safety note - do not put both feet in the bucket at once or you will fall over! **Things seen today:** Wet horizontal car mechanic near the showers, 500 XT air-cooled yam!

STAGE 11

From Kayes we march on to Bamako. The desert landscape has changed and trees are abundant. Small villages start to pop up so speed limits for the riders come into force.

How much luck can one guy have! After the days stage Tom comes in and, after a good polish, I reckon



the bike's ready. While re-fitting the sumpguard I notice that the main bolt on the rear shock linkage is hanging out - so it's tools out again after another trip to KTM!

STAGES 12 AND 13

Bamako to Labe, Labe to Tambacounda. There is no assistance allowed in Labe (they have to polish their own bikes) - this is called the marathon stage so we go straight to Tambacounda. Here we are again waiting, thinking the worse and hoping for the best. Ian Peberdy's waiting for Mick Extance, Alex Poppy's waiting for Patricia Watson Millar and I'm waiting for Tom. Mick loses an hour due to his rear mousse braking up but makes it, then in comes Tom - smiling as usual – followed by Patricia Watson Millar.

STAGE 14

The last proper day on the rally and we head for Dakar. There are navigation problems for most as the road book (the pace notes that depict the route) became very confusing but all remaining British riders make it to Dakar. Hurrah! It's a great effort all round. So that's Mick Extance, Nicky Plumb, Patsy Quick and Clive Town safely here plus the other riders/machines we've adopted on the way - Tom, Patricia Watson Millar (Brit/German), Tall Swedish Girl On Quad (Swedish) and the 500cc XT air-cooled Yam (Japanese)!

To sleep in a bed for the first time in a while feels strange and still going to the bathroom with your head torch when there's an electric light feels even stranger!

STAGE 15

Lac Rosé. The finish! Just 110km around a lake with flamingos, crowds of people, corporate marquees and a big party. The sense of achievement for all the finishers is written across their faces. For now this is the end but in just one month they'll all start to think about next year? Perhaps on a very well-polished 500cc XT air-cooled Yam!

DBR's dumbed-down equivalent of Monty Python (Sutty) chops his speed iron in for something that – on paper at least – should be a little more sedate







WITH PRETTY much fudge all in the way of motocross action happening up our way in twinter months I came up with the stellar plan

of trying something new this year.

Unfortunately, my plan of becoming
Morecambe's premier gigolo kind of fell through
and so it was back to the drawing board.

A second – and much better – idea came to
fruition however and this cunning plan saw me

driving over to Malcolm Rathmell Sport in t'Yorkshire to pick up a 2.9 Sherco Basic trials bike to keep me occupied through the winter months. So what is a Sherco Basic? Well, er, basically it's a 2006 model 2.9 Sherco in 2005 clothing. Cunning stuff!

The long-term plan of acquiring a trials bike is for me to learn about getting into trials after being a motocross racer for more than half my life. I'm expecting to learn a little bit of throttle control along the way as well as having a whole bunch of fun.

While I was over at MRS I also dipped into the DBR wallet of darkness and purchased a Nau trials believed as ome Gaerne boots with grip on the bottom. I'm figuring normal motocross kit will suffice for everything else – and I'm sorry but I ain't ever gonna feel the need to wear a Lycra suit – but trials boots and holmate are kind of specialist to so helmets are kind of specialist to say the least and a necessity for a newbie like myself. Once back at base the first thing to do was

go and try my new weapon of choice. The venue for my baptism was my Uncle Raymond's farm in not so sunny Cheshire. Raymond used to be a top regional trials rider in his day so he was only too happy to let me splash in and out of his river for a while so I

could get used to the bike.

And after riding for a few hours I think I'm just about getting the hang of this trials lark. Admittedly, I'm still crap compared to most other trials rider in the country but I'm learning fast and just about think I'm ready to have a proper go at a trial – yup, one with observers and sections and everything. No doubt you can read about that real soon.

read about that real soon.

On my second session out with the bike I had to do one of the last tasks you'll hopefully ever have to perform on your trials bike (especially one that's owned by Uncle Malc and Auntie Rhoda Rathmell) and that's draining the engine and carb after completely submerging aforementioned bike in aforementioned river.

The first thing you need to do when you submerge your bike under water is kill the engine before too much of the wet stuff is drawn through into the engine. Then it's a matter of dragging your bike to the side of the torrent and getting straight to work. Don't bother trying to start the bike because you are quite frankly wasting your time.

frankly wasting your time.

The fuel tank and rear mudguard/seat panel

The fuel tank and rear mudguard/seat panel thingy comes off quite quickly by undoing the four Allen screws that hold them on. Now you'll have access to the engine, carb and airfilter. Remove the airfilter and squeeze – not wring – it as dry as you can. The airbox on the Sherco has a water trap beneath the induction outlet and in this case it was completely full. So to save messing about I fully removed the airbox from the carb and returned its contents

Next job is to drain the carb. Undo the 14mm drainplug that's situated on the bottom of the float bowl and as the water drains out marvel at just how much there is in there and how dumb you are for getting it so wet in the first place.

Before replacing the plug it's worth re-attaching the fuel line to give the carb a little flush through with premix to get rid of the last drops of water from the workings. If you've got time – or you're doing this in a workshop – it would be advisable to fully strip and clean the



carb but seeing as riverbanks aren't the most hygienic of places we'll give that a miss right now and save the job until I get the Sherco safely home.

Remove the plug cap and clean it out with a moisture dispenser such as WD40. Now remove the sparkplug. You'll probably notice that it's a wee bit wet so clean that with WD40 then dry it off with a rag. Now for the fun part!

Turn the bike fully upside-down and balance it on the handlebars and rear frame section. On the Sherro you'll notice that this section of

the Sherco you'll notice that this section. On frame protects the end of the silencer from crashes and such – clever! Now turn the engine over by using the kickstart lever with your hand. This is where you can see just how much water your beloved machine has ingested – in this case it was quite a lot. Keep on turning the engine over until the air that's blown from the plug hole is pretty much gosh darn dry.

Again, if I was in the workshop I'd remove the exhaust and empty that too but to be honest it should be pretty much empty anyway.

Turn your bike rubber side down again and replace everything you've removed after cleaning and WD40ing it. Make sure the airfilter is dry before you replace it - if not you're just

is dry before you replace it — if not you're just gonna be sucking moisture through and your bike will run like a crock o' ***t!

Then, once everything is all back together, comes the moment of truth. Luckily for me the bike started first kick and ran like a good 'un. That's when I could relax safe in the knowledge that Uncle Malc probably wasn't going to hunt me down and kill me for wrecking one of his bikes (this time at least anyway) — phewsh!

The final step is to go and enjoy riding trials some more!

Thanks guys!

SUTTY'S ROLL OF HONOUR

Just a quick note to say thanks to Malcolm
Rathmell Sport for the loan of the bike.

MRS are the main UK importers for Sherco
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as Ipone lubricants. They can be contacted
on 01423 772885 or by email at
info@malcolmrathmellsport.com. I'd also
like to send out a cheers geez to my Uncle
Raymond for the use of his land – and
water – for this month's article.

GEEK CHIC!

With his 38th birthday fast approaching and a pro career stretching into its third decade, South African Collin 'Geek' Dugmore's still the most bankable rider in his adopted homeland of Germany

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

AS COLLIN Dugmore approaches his 38th birthday he's still the single biggest draw in his adopted homeland as he starts his 21st season of racing in Germany.

Yeah," he admits, "pretty far advanced but still enjoying it and loving every moment on the track. That's the only reason I'm still racing."

So how did a South African end up in Germany? "Back in the '80s there was an international series in SA every year and they invited a lot of riders from America and Europe - Rex Staten, Jacky Martens, Harry Everts and they all really enjoyed it and that's how we got a GP in 1985. A German guy by the name of Werner Schutz used to come over and at the time the up-and-coming kids were Robbie Herring and me.

"Werner asked me if I wanted to come and race in Germany but I said I wanted to finish school first - that was important for my father

and for me. I was 17 and Werner arranged an offer for me to race a blue Maico. I came across and said I'd give myself three years and here I am 20 years later. If it hadn't worked out I'd have become a jet fighter pilot like my dad.'

The teenage tearaway couldn't speak the language but found other ways to communicate. "I think it's just my attitude towards racing, towards the fans, just the South African way. I was brought up to be friendly to everyone, to be open. And through my riding style I won a lot of fans in those days.

"It wasn't always easy. There was a culture shock because Germany was very different to the rest of the world back then and then there was the weather. I arrived in February and was coming from plus 32 degrees to minus 51 in Siegen. That was a cold winter!

The main fan base in Germany is in the south but I spent the first seven years in Siegen

and I had a large fan base there. It's a kind of isolated community in the mountains and everyone knew who I was. I used to walk down the street and people would come up to me and ask for my autograph. I had good coverage in the local papers and everything."

Although twice top 10 in the world, Collin's always concentrated on the German domestic scene – a decision made for him in the early vears. "Back then I was not able to ride the complete world series because, as a South African, I had to get visas for every single country except Britain and Switzerland and some countries just wouldn't let me in.

"Sweden was interesting. Back in those days you could wait for six weeks for a visa just as a tourist. I had to pretend I was going for a holiday, not to race motocross. I even had an aunt living in Sweden but there was an embargo against South Africans because of apartheid.

"So I just arrived at the border and we tried to smugale me through in the back of the van. But they found me. Luckily I had a visa for Finland and they bought my story that I only needed a visa for transit. So they gave me a five-day visa which was just enough to race

"All hell let loose later that year when Sweden had the Motocross des Nations. I was racing with a German licence and I had been picked for the German team. That was great, I told them - but they had to get me the visa.

"Well, they phoned up the Swedish consul and told him the story how they had this young kid who they wanted to race for Germany and of course the consul replied that Germans don't need a visa. 'No, he's South African' they said and the tone changed immediately. Then they made the mistake of saying 'yeah, but he was already there racing the GP back in the summer'. Can you imagine? The roof blew off! It's all changed now but that was wild back then.

"And it wasn't only the Swedes. The first place I ever went outside Germany was Italy and they wouldn't give me a visa either. I had a friend with me who could speak Italian and they told him a lot of South Africans are terrorists and they weren't going to let me in.

"My manager was also the secretary of the German DMV federation, he rang up his Italian counterpart and 45 minutes later the consul himself came through on the phone and apologised for what had happened. That was the first country that ever gave me a





three-month visa - everywhere else I had to get a new visa every time I went there.

"And then there was Czecho. They had a fence round the place and border guards with machine guns so I had no chance. The first time I got in there was in 1990 when the Russians were getting ready to move out. I kinda talked my way in with stickers, caps and all that stuff but even then I still had to get out again.

"Every border was a nightmare. Once I didn't have a valid visa at the Austrian border. I was there for nine hours and in the end I had to turn round and go back home. I mean, I was 17, I couldn't exactly do a lot about the political situation in SA. Even some of the press were against me. There were some who actually came and told me SA was a bad country. I just used to ask them if they'd ever been there to know. All I wanted to do was race motocross and I had all of that put on me."

The dynamic style came naturally. "Motocross in SA was almost SX-based, Either you made the triple or died. SX was almost nothing in Europe - the first races in Germany were all on wooden boards. They were horrific, I got hurt so many times in those. When they started to bring dirt in they also started the Super Jump and I would lay it flat and take both hands off the bars. Back then that was sensational.

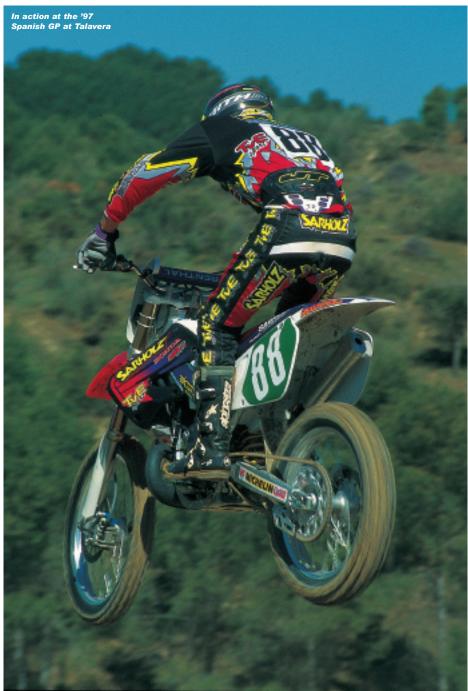
"Racing was fun then. The whole GP scene was like one big family. Everyone would be travelling in trucks to all the races - one long convoy from one GP to the next - and we would do four weeks at a time, one weekend after the other in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy. When I go around a GP paddock now I see sullen faces, closed tents and I must admit I don't miss it."

Collin hasn't raced GPs outside Germany and SA for a couple of years but he is still there at the start of every SX season. "You know, most guys are finished with it at 25 but I still enjoy it. The only years I have missed I was hurt and that's the only times I had a break in

"In the '80s and '90s we just never stopped. The German outdoor season was like a zillion races, 32 weekends non-stop and midweek holiday races too. The body was beat up and it needed a three-month break really but then it was straight into the SX and the big teams wanted you out there at the indoors.

"Two weeks after the final outdoor you'd be racing indoor and by the time that season







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finished it was two weeks to the start of the next outdoor season. Sometimes you'd be carrying injuries and you just kept on carrying them until you were completely dead.

"But SX still goes well. I've even had some podiums this winter. I've got a very good team backing me at the moment - EBS Sturm. They're a very relaxed team and riding is pleasurable then. When the team atmosphere is awesome you can go to the line hurting and put it out of your mind.

Collin's nickname – 'Geek' – goes back to his youth. "Robert Herring gave me the name. I called him Fish and he called me Geek. It's a little magical creature in a cartoon series in SA.

"The racing was fun back then but it was intense. We were really good friends but we both wanted to win. The world was different then - my dad taught me to drive a car when I was 15 and one day I asked him if I could drive round to Robbie's house. Robbie went wild with his dad that I was allowed to go out on my own. Next day I'm just getting ready to go to school, there was a knock at the door and there was Robbie with his dad's pick-up!"

Collin was never short of offers of machinery. "I always had plenty of options with the German teams. I was one of the most marketable people in Germany and I still am. That's satisfying because it means I did something right in my life. I never got a factory deal but I was injured quite a lot. But the GPs were just for fun. I earned my money at the German races and the German teams were only really interested in those.

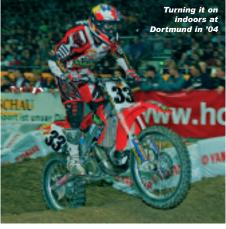
"In 1996 I should have been fifth in the world on 125. I should have put a mousse on for the last race but I didn't, I got a flat and I lost fifth to Fanton. I was pretty motivated that year. The Honda was not the fastest bike out there but I was having fun. It's a pity I only did the one season in the class because I'm actually a 125 rider. That's my style, twisting the throttle a lot, hanging it out, riding loose.

The Kawasaki in 1987 was my own bike. Then I was backwards and forwards between Suzuki and Sarholz Hondas plus the couple of years on KTM. I have five German titles, three with Burkhardt Sarholz and two with Millennium KTM.

This will be Dugmore's final outdoor season - although he has already promised to race Dortmund next January too - but his future remains in the sport. "My riding schools are actually a problem at the moment. Last year I broke the middle hand bone and was out of racing for three months so I did some schools. I wasn't even advertising - it just spread by word of mouth - and I was being inundated by calls. I already have 19 weekends of schooling this summer and I just can't take anymore.

"I have big plans for the future. I'm going to create the Dugmore Academy and we want to help the riders out in every aspect of the sport, right down to what to do when they are hurt. I mean, they go to their local GP and those guvs just have no idea. I'm going to be working with Stefan Nüsser and we want to point the guys to proper sports doctors when they get hurt and to give them proper training plans so their body is ready for the exertions of motocross.

"My youngest pupil is four-and-a-half years old, my eldest is 70 - that's seven zero - and he's fit as a fiddle. You cannot believe it, he is still trying to improve his technique and his fitness. You can have motocross schools where you just push them with technique or you can give them schools where they go home smiling. I want to do the latter!



BELLE WIEW

When a posse of US hotshots lined up in Manchester for the '86 supercross, an II-year-old Sutty was ideally situated to catch all the action and - surprise, surprise - Uncle Jack was there as well...

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle

"THAT WAS the best British supercross since Manchester in 1986!" We were at a crowded party to celebrate the success of our second night at the Odyssey Arena in Belfast and a beaming Sutty towered over me like a great goth Buzz Lightyear.

I initially agreed but later recalled epic evenings at Birmingham NEC starring Rick Johnson and Warren Edwards in 1989 and Larry Ward in 1992. And that unforgettable first year at Sheffield in '97 when Larry returned to steal victory after a colossal contest with Jeremy McGrath and Damon Bradshaw.

An 11-year-old Sutty sat in the concrete and corrugated iron bleachers at Manchester's enormous, elderly Belle Vue speedway stadium back in September '86. The Belgian-based 'Hard Cross' Association who had run a week earlier at Gothenburg in Sweden attracted an astonishing entry to their inaugural UK promotion.

The Saturday and Sunday afternoon races would feature 1985 AMA supercross champion Jeff Ward, top US 125 privateer (and future world supercross champ) Guy 'Airtime' Cooper, 250 AMA contender 'Bullet' Billy Liles and Suzuki's AJ Whiting taking on European world champions Eric Geboers, Georges Jobe, John van den Berk and Pekka Vehkonen plus explosive English newcomer Rob Herring and

British national champions Jem Whatley and Greg Hanson.

Also in this heady mix were flying Finns Mika Khouki and Ismo Vehkonen (Pekka's cousin) and super Swedes Anders Ericksson, Jorgen Nilsson and Leif Nicklasson!

Sadly, though, American master trackbuilder John Savitski - who moulded the early years of Paris Bercy – failed to show and the long, winding track proved a disappointment.

Jeff Ward registered his dismay. "It's kind of a letdown," said the small, stocky, freckled Scotsman (Wardy was actually born in Glasgow). "Too one line. It's no good weaving through a series of curves like this. You need to lay out 180 degree turns. There's plenty of room in this stadium for that." Jeff paused and frowned. "When are they going to start letting people in?"

Sorry Jeff, they're here already. This is Belle Vue, not Anaheim!

Eventually, though, the grandstands on the opposite side of the stadium from the start straight, alongside a double and triple jump combination, filled up enough to create an air of excited anticipation around the boy Sutty and the autumn sun shone brightly.

Soft, powdery soil quickly dug out into deep ruts and trenches but like any quality field these guys launched into some riveting action once

the gate dropped. Van den Berk, Khouki, Ward and Herring - the latter urged on from the echoing grandstands - each won a heat. In the first semi Jobe tried to follow Whatley's low trajectory across the whoops and endoed out, cracking a rib. Then Greg Hanson (Kawasaki) won a repecharge to reach an enthralling final in which Geboers and van den Berk were taken out in the first turn.

Guy Cooper holeshot ahead of Herring, the crowd in uproar as the 16-year-old prodigy fended off factory superstar Ward. Then Cooper spun out and the Kawasaki pair pounced with Ward unable to find a gap before the chequered flag mistakenly went out early and red hot Herring had beaten the eight-time AMA champ!

It should have run 12 minutes plus two laps," muttered a mystified Ward. "I got my board saying four to go and the last lap flag went out. But it was fun...

Anders Ericksson grabbed third place from Yamaha team-mate Mika Khouki with Liles fifth from a storming van den Berk, Cooper's Honda and stylish second Brit Jem Whatley on his factory Cagiva.

AJ Whiting got a deputation of riders together that evening and requested the track be run in reverse direction on Sunday but Hard Cross boss Rene Hurner refused.







Rider presentation at the Belle Vue Hardcross and Georges Jobi (right) seems to be expressing his love of the brack to Handa-mounted American wild man Guy Cooper.

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"Hard Cross know only the theory of track construction," grinned Geboers. "They do not know how to put it into practice!"

'The Kid' did his best. He shoved bales across the low groove that wore through the left side of the whoops within half a heat on Sunday. Then he turned his attention to the 'speed bumps' before the finish, filling in and packing the rut that had made the wide line the only line. Bemused, silver-suited marshals stood around and gawped. One thought Geboers was cheating by creating his own fast line. "No, I am trying to make more lines," explained an exasperated Eric, eyeing the offender frostily. Then he shook his curly head. "This is stupid. This is not a rider's job!"

Thankfully, the marshals learned from Eric's energetic example and overtaking once more – with commitment and courage – became possible on the sweep round to the finish line. Anders Ericksson found it. Pekka Vehkonen used it. And Eric Geboers needed it.

Van den Berk, Khouki, Ward and Herring once more shared the heats with Geboers and Jobe – typically racing despite injury – taking the semis and Greg Hanson once more in via the last chance.

I viewed the final from the grandstands behind the start straight with Rob Andrews and the Surrey dirt bike mafia. Andrews had broken ribs the previous day in his first 'proper' supercross. "I'd watched Alan Morrison seat bouncing those awkward doubles where the landing was higher than the take-off ramp," smiled Rob. "How did he know that? And I remember walking the track with Dickie Dye and his dog Dipstick, who blitzed the whoops better than Chad Reed could do today!"

Unlucky Eric Geboers hit neutral into the fast first turn and disappeared through the bright blue haybales. Remounting a distant last, the Belgian rode heroically, puling off several colossal overtaking manoeuvres on his wild way to snatching sixth place from van den Berk on the final lap.

While we were on our feet in the grandstand hollering ourselves hoarse, Jeff Ward hounded early leader Rob Herring until the teenager finally cracked. So Wardy won with Herring splitting the Yanks ahead of Liles, Pekka Vehkonen, Guy Cooper and Geboers.

On the rostrum – as dusk closed in creating a magical, luminous atmosphere in the decaying (and long since demolished) old speedway stadium – Ward, to the crowd's approval, complimented Herring's promise. "Rob is a very good rider but I just had to put the pressure on and force him to make a mistake."

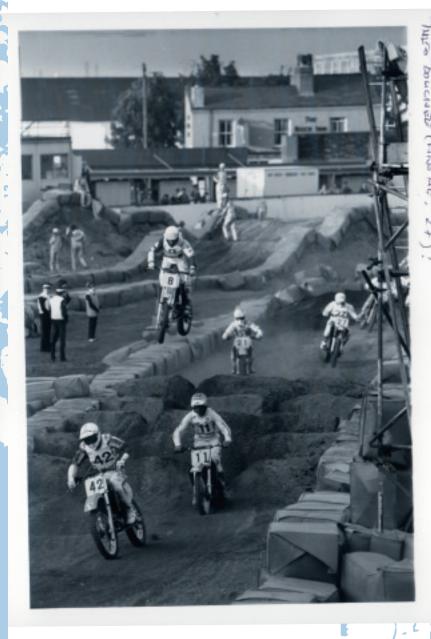
Billy Liles, on the brink of a stellar European grand prix career, also paid his respects to England's raw newcomer. "Rob Herring really impressed me," drawled the Georgia Boy. "He's so fast. I wish he'd come to the States and get a little more experience. I think that he can do really well."

Robbie never did and nor did supercross ever return to the ill-fated Manchester Belle Vue stadium. But it had bounced a big bad boy from Bollington in Cheshire up and down in the bleachers!

"Mum and dad loved speedway so as a family we went a lot to Belle Vue," recalls Sutty. "Dad was a steady AMCA expert motocrosser and I was mithering and mithering him to take me to the supercross.

"We were on the back straight, where it seemed quite busy. The main thing I remember is Herring leading the final and everyone in the stands stamping their feet, like a Mexican wave of foot stamping! Also Cooper leading the final until he spun round in a tight right-hander and Greg Hanson pulling a massive whip over the triple by us as he won the last chance!"





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STEPPING UP!

Josh Grant has hired a new trainer and is taking racing much more seriously – and it shows – so what's the gameplan for America's latest 'next big thing'?

Words and photos by Steve Cox

EVER SINCE JOSH GRANT'S FIRST
APPEARANCE AT AN AMA NATIONAL
PIT PUNDITS HAVE TABBED HIM AS
POTENTIALLY ONE OF THE NEXT
GREATS IN OUR SPORT. IN HIS VERY
FIRST NATIONAL MOTO HE
GRABBED THE HOLESHOT AT
HANGTOWN AND THEN LEFT.
CHECKED OUT. HE WAS
FLAT GONE.

He held a lead of more than 15 seconds by the time James Stewart got into second place and Stewart wasn't gaining on Josh – until he stalled his CRF250R and was unable to restart it.

So Grant has raw speed outdoors. And after visiting him recently at a supercross test track it's apparent that he has raw speed indoors now as well.

DBR: Let's start with what's changed since last year so far as getting your injuries healed and picking up Ryan Hughes as your trainer. How did that go? JG: "I'd say a lot has changed from training and taking time off. I honestly think that this injury [knee] was actually the best thing for me. It got me to realise how bad I want it. Training with Ryno and everything like that made a big improvement in my fitness and my strength and I've changed a lot since the outdoors. And I know it's for the better. Him and I have been working not just on training and stuff but riding techniques too. Every little bit counts and I feel like I've gained a lot in the last few months."

DBR: Your outdoor riding speaks for itself but indoors you've struggled. What have you done to address that?

JG: "I can recover from mistakes a lot easier now because |









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I just don't want to point out or anything like that."

DBR: Yeah, if you get 100 points in three consecutive 125cc SX seasons you're bumped. Did you get 100 points last year?

JG: "No. I got 71. So I guess I'm good for at least two years after this one."

DBR: For the East Coast now we've got Jeff Alessi out, Ben Townley out, Troy Adams out, Joaquim Rodrigues out... Is your team-mate Tommy Hahn going to be back?

JG: "He's been back riding longer than me so he should be good."

DBR: The point is that the field is thinning so not only are things shifting in your favour but you have to worry about getting through supercross healthy so that you can be 100 per cent by the time the Nationals start, right?

JG: "Well, after watching Joaquim crash it was kind of like you've got to make it to the race first. You've got to be healthy. You don't want to be worn out and you don't want to take risks or chances that could blow it for you. I'm not going to."

DBR: As a young rider coming up in this sport are there things that you look to as example of what to do and what not to do?
JG: "I kind of do my own programme. I mean, I have my own circle and there are a few people in there that I trust and that I look up to and I think I've realised who to use as a



resource – who to hire and stuff. I kind of just do my own programme. But I stay away from the wrong crowd and stuff like that."

DBR: It seems like a bit of an epidemic in that for every 10 riders who come up, like you, who are really good and have lots of potential maybe one or two go more than three or four years. How will you ensure that you are one of the two that make it?

JG: "I'm just going to keep my head down and work hard. I mean, I don't want to be some washed-up pro out training little kids at Starwest [local MX track]. I've seen

what I want and I'll do whatever it takes to succeed in motocross and succeed in life."

DBR: You almost got a permanent number this year.
Do you know which number you might take?
JG: "I'll just play out this year and see what comes up.
If I do good I think I'll definitely go lower."

DBR: So you wouldn't take your amateur number, 86? JG: "I would, actually. I mean, a bunch of people have had it that have made it look bad the last couple years [laughs]."





After two rounds of complete domination in Canada in December, Kawasaki's 20-year-old phenom Stewart comes into Anaheim with only one hope – to start the AMA series on the right note with a win. Of course, Reed and Carmichael are hoping to do the same.

Stewart and Carmichael don't make it easy on themselves as they start near the tail end of the top 10. "I got a great jump, actually," Carmichael says. "My reaction time was awesome. Unfortunately, I spun."

Stewart shadows Carmichael through the field – even making a move past RC at one point, only for Carmichael to blitz back by through the whoops as the two of them simultaneously pass Kyle Lewis.

Reed soon moves into the lead just before the Carmichael/Stewart train slots in behind him. For the next five laps Reed leads followed by Carmichael and Stewart. At the halfway point, Carmichael makes his move for the lead after Reed cases a triple out of a corner. Only three corners later Carmichael goes down in the whoops.

"I got by Chad – he made a little mistake there by the mechanics' area and I was able to get by him," Carmichael says. "I just tried to get a good run into the whoops – I felt the faster I could go into them, the better I would be at the end of them. I just missed one and the rest is history."

"I almost hit him!" Stewart says of RC's crash. "Those whoops were tough tonight. Clear Channel and Dirt Wurx did a good job tonight getting the track ready. The track was definitely tough tonight"

From there Stewart begins to hound Reed for the lead until Reed bobbles in a rhythm section and Stewart goes around the outside of him.

"Toward the end I had some small problems with the rhythms and some sections of whoops but we'll fix that next week," says Reed. "But I felt good on the bike. It felt good to go out there and do two or three jumps that I hadn't done all day in the Main Event. I felt like I had a good rhythm and it was going to be a good race for the three of us.

"Unfortunately, Ricky went down and about that time James caught up to me and there wasn't a lot I could do about it. What was fun for me was to get out there and show some of what I could do."

Stewart goes on to a seemingly easy victory, followed by Reed about 10 seconds back. Carmichael recovers for third.

"I look at it that I just want to go to every race and do my best," Stewart says. "I've had a good season so far and I just want to do my best. I don't look at it as a points lead or anything. I just want to go to each race and see what happens."

What happens at round two, though, is a first-turn fall in the Main Event. Supercross legend Jeremy McGrath – now nicknamed "Part-Time" rather than "Showtime" – brings the crowd of more than 50,000 people to life by grabbing the holeshot and then two turns into the race pulling his legendary Nac-Nac in front of a field of the world's best supercross racers. Reed follows and Carmichael's fifth while Stewart picks himself up.

"You know, it's kind of hard to remember. I just know I highsided off somebody and fell," Stewart says. "I think I was in a rush trying to start the thing. I was just pretty far back."

On lap two Reed makes his way by his idol McGrath but MC holds onto second for the next five laps before <u>Carmichael finally catches him and makes a pass stick.</u>

At this point Stewart is already up to sixth, only seven laps into the race. However, just after Carmichael moves into second, Reed makes a huge mistake and goes down actually catching a handlebar to the chin and getting his helmet's face mask stuck on his bars.

"Yeah, the track was slick and the side of the jump was kind of worn away a little bit and I just hit it – I don't remember if I lost the front or I lost the rear but it kind of just went sideways."

He gets up quickly – only losing about six seconds to Carmichael – but the damage is done. Carmichael is within sight of Reed and he begins to hound the former champion. Three laps later Reed messes up the rhythm section and Carmichael jumps alongside him before pushing him into the Tuff Blox on the outside of the track to complete the pass.

"I came up with a lot of speed off the triple and I just held my speed," Carmichael says. "I had to bring him to the outside or he was going to go by me so I did what I had to do, that's all. We both stayed upright and did battle after that."

Carmichael stretches his lead, eventually winning by 2.6 seconds from Reed. Carmichael also sets the fastest lap of the Main Event.

Stewart amazingly recovers from his start crash to finish on the podium behind Reed. "You can't win [the championship] in three races but you can certainly lose it. The main thing was I was trying to get up and collect



AMA SX WRAP



down there I was trying to think of the championship. It's not a one-race shoot-out."

With one win each, the

RC/Stewart rivalry hits fever pitch at Anaheim II. Stewart and Carmichael gate at the tail end of the top 10 but they quickly start working through traffic. Ivan Tedesco grabs the lead and in less than a lap he's joined by Stewart and, a lap later, Carmichael.

Stewart gets out front while

Over the next couple of laps Carmichael reels Stewart in and by lap eight he's glued to Stewart's rear wheel. Every now and then Carmichael loses a few bike-lengths

but seems to be able to catch Stewart at will.

"I knew he had some good lines," Stewart says. "He didn't have a problem keeping up with me – it was kind of like how I felt in Toronto. You can just kind of get back there and watch the guy make mistakes and stuff and just

The capacity crowd stands as Carmichael repeatedly puts a wheel in on Stewart, only to back off to avoid contact. "I felt I could've got a little buck-wild and try to put a move on him but I was waiting," Carmichael says.

Stewart makes some spectacular saves under pressure from Carmichael, including landing on a Tuff Block off of a jump, nearly landing on a lapped rider and nearly crashing twice in the same section of whoops. But it all comes to a head with two laps to go as Stewart jumps into a corner and goes down as he gets on the brakes trying to avoid a downed Mike Brown. Carmichael tip-toes around the outside to avoid Stewart and Brown and the

Reed moves into second after the fall and Stewart recovers for third.

"I heard the crowd go nuts so I was kind of hoping they were in a pile-up together," grins Reed. "But when I came up there it was only James. No, I don't wish that on them – but it would be nice [laughs]."







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words by **JEFF KOCAN** courtesy of RacerX photo by **STEVE COX**

BEAKWEATHER

Last year's predicted Perfect Storm has finally arrived — and it's sent temperatures soaring from LA to NYC...

ere in New York City things aren't quite right. I'm supposed to be trudging around Gotham with my heavy coat on and a scarf bunched up around my neck, protecting me from the bitter north east cold. There should be a foot of snow on the ground. My windows should not be wide open. But the coat and scarf are still in the closet and there's not a snowflake in sight. It's late January and everything is different than a year ago at this time. There's been a change in the weather.

As it turns out, last season's Perfect Storm the drooled over clash between Ricky Carmichael, Chad Reed and James Stewart - is finally here. It's for real. And it's hot.

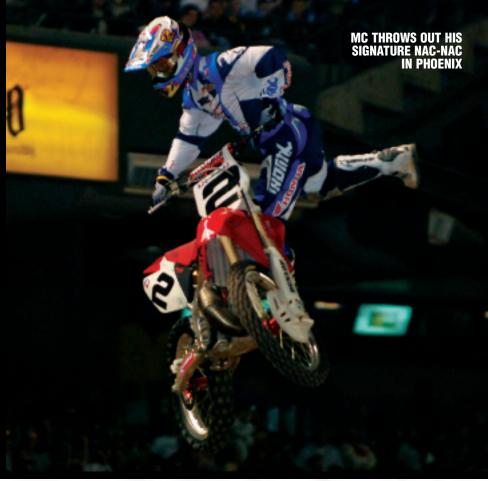
Through the first five rounds of the US and World Supercross GP series, the power trio of American supercross stayed atop the podium exclusively. Reed got bogged down in the San Francisco mud at round four of the AMA series, dropping him to fifth there and giving Nick Wey a third place breakthrough. He'll be happy to have only dropped a couple points there, though, after last year's disastrous start. Speedy Reedy is still in the hunt and at this stage that's all any rider can ask for.

James Stewart's 'New Beginning' is for real folks. That newfound patience and maturity he showed in Canada? Yeah, it looks like that's here to stay. While James had everyone talking in December after his remarkable tear through Canada, January was his time to prove himself. And what better way to do that than winning the Anaheim season opener?

After his wins in Toronto and Vancouver, Stewart was actually a favourite to take the first US win of the year. The kid was on a roll and Carmichael - legend that he may be - has never actually won the first round in his premier class career (take a moment to think that one over as great as he is, Ricky never started the series in the lead). Carmichael and Stewart got horrible starts in the Anaheim I Main Event but they each battled through the pack and eventually caught up to Reed. Keeping his streak alive, though, RC hit the ground and was only able to take third. Stewart stalked the Aussie and used all that Canuck momentum to propel him to the win and the early points lead.

Round two - in Phoenix, Arizona - was a remarkable race for several reasons. Carmichael took his first win of the season, Reed moved up a spot on the podium and Stewart charged back for third after a first-turn crash left him stranded at the back. But the highlight of the evening came from the king himself, Jeremy 'Part-Time Showtime' McGrath.

After a poor showing on the CR250R - one of the few remaining in the SX class - McGrath and Honda decided they would switch to the four-stroke CRF450R after Phoenix. The two-stroke just didn't have the power to compete with a full field of thumpers anymore. But somebody must have forgotten to tell Jeremy that in Arizona because in the Main Event that



night he pulled the must unexpected holeshot this side of Mike LaRocco and rocketed to the early lead. Then, to cap off an already magical moment, he threw out his signature Nac-Nac and brought the house down. It was a scene that will replay in the minds of every fan who was in attendance that night (unfortunately, it won't be replaying on television - the CBS network cameras were all focused on James Stewart who was on the ground in the first turn). MC eventually gave up the lead to the new guard but it's great to know that he's still got it in him. Even though he's just Part-Time now he'll always be Showtime and he's going out very near the top.

The return trip to Anaheim for round three was yet another special occasion as it marked the 20th anniversary of the legendary Bailey vs Johnson battle of Anaheim '86, the benchmark for just about every race for the last two decades. In a fitting tribute to that night, Carmichael and Stewart gave us another one for the ages, dicing for the lead for 18 laps until Stewart lost his front end. RC took the top spot for the second

week in a row followed by Reed and Stewart for a carbon copy of the previous week's podium.

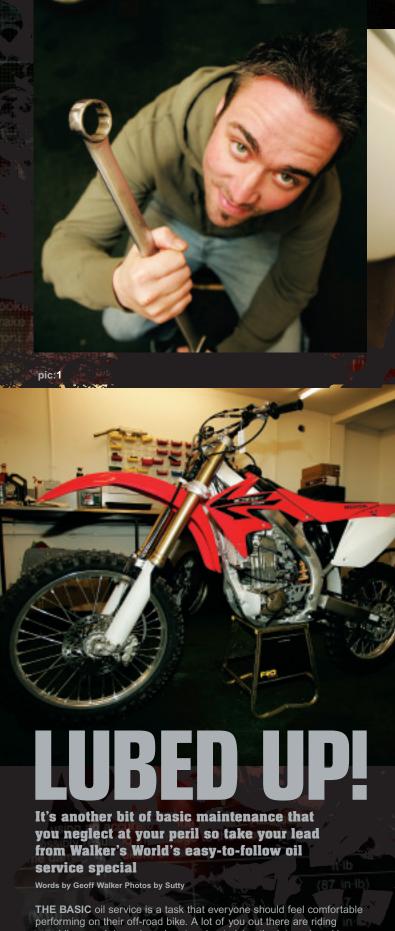
James got his revenge in the San Francisco mud a week later but Carmichael kept him honest. In a race where just about everyone else hit the (very wet) dirt, the two Floridians stayed on two wheels and fought for the win until the very last lap. The race was even better than the previous week's and the two riders brought The Hottest January to a thrilling close.

Finally, I'm a little sad to say that this column marks the end of a long run for me here at DBR. For the last six years or so I've been sending out my monthly Stateside report but the time has come to move on. I've had great fun babbling on about people throwing rocks through my windows, weather reports and my beloved Newcastle United - and even some MX and SX from time to time - and I'm thankful that you've been kind enough to let me ramble as long as you have. And a special thanks goes out to Sean and Sutty for their patience with my serial deadline abuse.

It's been great, everyone. I'll be seeing you...



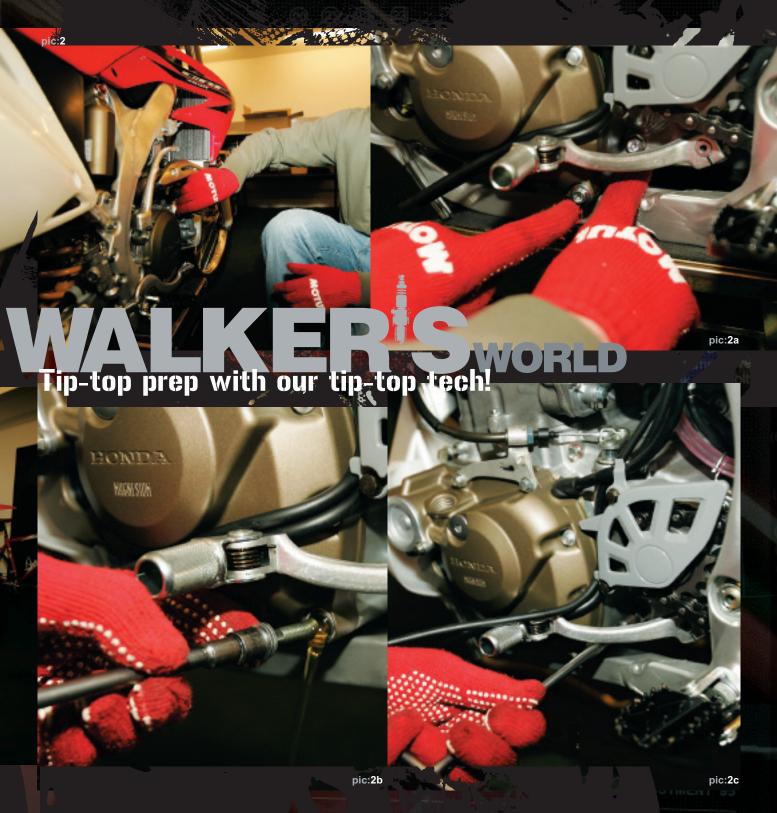




your bikes week-in and week-out and not giving the internal workings of your motors a nice bath in lovely fresh oil. Go on, you know you want to!

The motor on your bike needs fresh oil. Four-strokes in particular are really in need of constant attention when it comes to the oil service. There are so many moving parts which require lubrication and if there's no lube the running surfaces will ultimately heat up and fail.

The viscosity of the oil is also important. When motor oil is over-used it becomes thin and its lubricating qualities quickly disappear which causes damage to your motor's internals. That's why the oil you use should always be a racing oil - there are many on the



market so speak to your local dealer as you need to be able to get your pinkies on lots of your chosen oil.

As most of you know I use Motul as the lube of choice on the mag machines as I have reassurance from Valentino that they work real hard to produce some great oils.

Sutt Dawg's new CRF450 has turned up at the workshop so I will use this as a demonstration weapon. The Honda causes a little confusion as most of the other manufacturers use single oil systems but the Honda has two sides to the motor. There is the clutch and gearbox side and there is the top-end lubrication side.

I like to use semi-synthetic oil in the gearbox as I've found that the clutch stays feeling positive for longer this way. In the top half of the motor I like to use a fully synthetic oil – Motul 300V 5/40wt racing four-stroke oil actually showed an increase in power on a CRF250 a couple of years ago.

You only need basic tools for this small job – 12mm t-bar, 14mm t-bar, oil catcher and a measuring jug.

pic:1 Obviously the Dawg machine is brand new so it's sparkly. Try to

make sure your own bike is equally clean all around the motor before you start the task.

pic:2,2a,2b,2c Remove both oil filler caps and locate both the drain bolts on the motor. On a CRF250 the one on the left is the drain for the clutch and gearbox and the one on the bottom of the motor is for the top half. However on the '06 CRF450 both drain bolts are situated on the left. The higher bolt is for the engine oil and the lower is for the gearbox.

Whip the puppy off the stand and onto a side stand at this point. If you have one oil catcher then drain one side at a time or if you have two catchers – or one big unit – then you can drain both

catchers – or one big unit – then you can drain both.

Always drain the main body of oil from each side of the motor one at a time to start with as you should look at the oil closely for any metal fragments draining from the motor. If you see any metal then get down to your dealer – you've got other troubles!

If the engine oil is looking okay then drain the gearbox oil, again check this for foreign bodies as it starts to drain.

pic:3 With both sides now draining together you can hurry the job up a





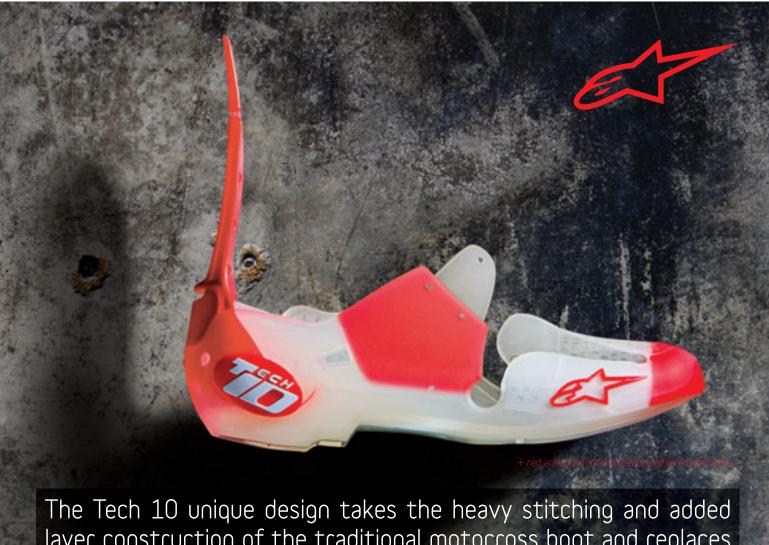
oil in the motor. If you are not in a great hurry at this stage then you are best to leave the motor to drain overnight or do some strength increasing exercises such as sit-ups. If you're in a hurry to get the job done then make sure your bike is inside in a warm environment so the oil is at a good temp to drain.

pic:4 When you're sure there is as much oil drained from the motor as you're going to get then you should clean and carefully replace the drain bolts making sure the sealing washers are in good condition. If they are too 'squeezed out' they'll not provide an efficient seal and you will have a leak. Replace these washers around every fourth oil change. Torque the bolts up.

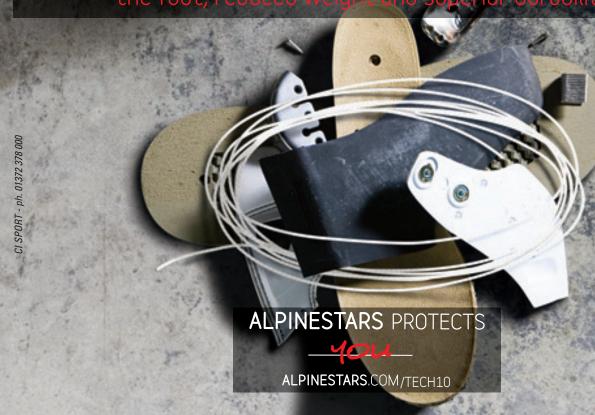
jug and slowly pour into the left side filler. That is left as you would sit on the bike.

pic:6 Measure your gearbox oil to the specified level of 670ml in your cleaned out jug and slowly pour into the right side filler. That is right as you would sit on the bike. Put the filler caps back into place and there you have it - a Honda oil change.

I would recommend that every time you ride you change the gearbox oil and every two or three rides you change the engine oil. The oil filter should be renewed every second engine oil change to keep everything all twinkly sparkly!



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I really cannot big this little unit up enough. Most people have no idea how long their bike has been abused for between services. This puppy will take the strain of the time-keeping so you can make sure you keep up with your bike's service schedule which should make it a little more sellable at the end of the year.

sellable at the end of the year.

The Sutt Dawg CRF is the first to have the meter fitted as I have to keep an eye on him. Sutton is fearless when it comes to the destruction test. He also needs to ride a little more to get rid of his ever increasing waistline!

pic:1 This small wonder is really easy to fit. It will only take you a few minutes and should stay fixed in place as long as you're careful to fit it correctly at the beginning. You must make sure the area you choose to stick the meter is flat, free from all crud and nice and warm. Use some brake or carb cleaner and a clean cloth to totally clean the fitting surface and the back of the unit.

pic:4 With the unit and the frame warmed up stick one side of the double-sided sticky pad onto the back of the unit before fitting it firmly into place. I used a bit more gentle heat at this stage to make sure the unit was well stuck.

pic:5 With the unit stuck like ***t to a blanket you can begin to feed the pick up wire towards the HT lead. Make sure the wire is running in a neat fashion as you don't want it rubbing through as time goes on.

pic:6 Wrap the pick-up wire around the HT lead three times and fix to itself before trimming the excess wire.

pic:7 There you go - your hour meter is ready to rock and roll. So Sutty, exactly how long will you leave it between piston changes?



MEDPING BOY!

With a factory ride for '06, South African showboater Wyatt Avis is aiming to convert his spectacular style into GP points

Words and photos by Alex Hodgkinson

Flat-liner Wyat's get a reputation for giving the fans what they like to see



HE'S THE GP king of whip but Wyatt Avis has faced a stony road to stardom since coming to Europe six years ago. Saying that, the reward for the 21-year-old's persistence is an MX1 ride with Sarholz KTM - Mattighofen's official GP junior squad - and a full-factory bike, Ben Townley's '05er!

Wyatt's career has never been lacking in top class opposition, right from his early days in the SA youth scene. "I come from a place called Pinetown - a suburb of Durban - and I grew up racing locally every week with Grant Langston and Jarrett De Jager. And there were other fast kids who've never been to Europe like Ryan Williams and John Whiting.

"I was always behind them when I was younger because they were all one year older and that makes a difference at that age. I used to live about half-a-mile away from Grant and we used to go training together all the time.

Wyatt doesn't come from a biking family but they were soon hooked. "I just went crazy for a bike the first time I saw one. We didn't even know about racing then but my dad bought me my first bike when I was four and a little time later he was driving through town and saw bikes racing and we took it from there. I had my first race at five

And it wasn't too much later that show became as important as speed. "I had just moved onto 65cc and we went to watch a pro supercross and I saw Jeff Hodson do a whip on a tabletop. I was hooked. I had to figure out how to do that. And my dad thought it was cool too and didn't try to stop me.'

Wyatt's affection for acrobatics has not brought universal acclaim. "A lot of people don't like to see a racer do a whip, they think it's just for freestylers. But if a rider feels comfortable on a jump then why not? You're not going to do it unless you feel right. People who know me better know that if I'm playing around on a bike and doing tricks in practice then I'm in a good mood. It helps me feel more fluid on the bike. I just love it.

"I did a little bit of freestyle at the start of 2003 but that wasn't me. They are true specialists now. I just like to have fun and I know where my limits are. It's sad to see so many riders nowadays winning races and doing nothing. Okay there's a lot of money in it but they jump dead straight, no mistakes. You know, the crowd come to see the racing but they want to see some action too and they really appreciate it when the riders put on a little bit of a show

"People criticise Travis Pastrana for all of the tricks that he does but he learns bike control while he's doing it – if you know how it is to flip or do a 360 it becomes second nature to be able to save it if you get out of shape during a race."

So how come Wyatt decided to cross the Equator in Y2K? "I came to Europe looking for prestige. Once I got to 16 that year age difference didn't mean anything anymore and

Grant was gone. I won pretty much everything there was to win back home in SA then. I could have had the best deals there but the challenge was gone. I suppose I could have gone to road racing but that's not my scene.

'So halfway through 2000 I came here on a test for Sanstra Suzuki, a Dutch team. They were looking for a rider and Grant told them to give me a call.

Wyatt had arrived in Europe but life has not always been easy. "I didn't get to ride so many times that first year. I was entered for all of the Dutch championship races but the clearance from the SA federation only came through in time for one race. And I only got to race three GPs. There were others like Grobbendonk and Luxembourg but they were triple-headers and you had to get invited.

'The whole team switched to Yamaha the next year but they were already running out of money halfway through the year. Fortunately for me Boonenberg Motors, who were backing Kevin Strijbos, were also one of the sponsors of the team and when Sanstra folded I got to ride for them. They let me go to the Europeans with Kevin

"That first year it was just a mission to qualify but I learnt a lot. The speed is not a lot lower than the GPs, just enough that the guys who are 30th in the world will be racing for the win. But you learn how to qualify and you get to ride with a lot of different guys with different styles and different strengths. Everybody at







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that level is best at home and to beat guys of your age on their tracks is definitely a real learning process.'

For '02 Wyatt was back on Suzuki but still with Boonenberg. "Our plan was to do the Dutch and the Europeans and just take in the GPs if we got a chance.

But then he got hurt mid-season. "It was one week before the final round of the European championship in the Ukraine I was leading the series and only needed one fifth place to be champion but we went practising, I crashed and blew out my right knee and Luca Cherubini got the title.

"Initially the doctor said I would never ride again and it would be six months before I could even think about moving around normally. The medial bands, the crossbands, they were all wrecked. And I've got two screws in the top of my knee to hold the knee cap in place because I broke that too.

"But after three months I was already back on a bike. The doctor said he couldn't explain it but he gave me the OK. I trained for three weeks and came back with two-times top 15 in the Dutch championship and a few weeks later I qualified for the last GP and even

scored a few points."

The '03 season started off on Kawasaki with Satellite Racing Team. "Glen Dempsey had set it up with me and Jarrett De Jager. We were supposed to get factory support from Jan De Groot and the suspension Maschio had used the year before. Everything seemed fine until the first Dutch race but I crashed and hurt my other knee. I tore the medial band on the inside of the knee and with the pressure of the brace every time I pressed against the bike I just couldn't ride.

"We tried to race in Spain but it was no good so we decided to give it four weeks to heal up. I only started riding again just before Valkenswaard but I only rode there because the team asked me to. I wasn't ready, I didn't qualify and the team just folded.

"I'm sure Glen set up the team with all the best intentions but the concrete support was just never there. He knew Jarrett and me were good riders, was expecting good results and was expecting the sponsors to start coming in. But you can't base an entire GP season on hope. It was only the end of April, beginning of May and the money wasn't there. The team was never going to last the whole season - we

were already running second-hand pistons in the race bikes.

"Looking back on it everyone else in the paddock clearly knew long before me that all was not well. Theo Eggens had already approached me weeks before and made me an offer. I didn't know what was happening, I just said 'I'm riding for this team, I can't just up and quit' but he answered just to keep thinking about the offer and to give him a call if I wanted to switch teams."

Wyatt salvaged 23rd in the world but didn't have a ride for '04 until he got back in January. "I have to be grateful that I had a ride at all. I even had a choice of bike - two-stroke or fourstroke - and I broke into the top 10 in the GPs but that was a year of tears with Kurz Suzuki.

"I had a lot of problems with the way the team was set up. I blame myself - not the team - but we just didn't communicate enough at any level. We had bike problems and they couldn't fix it, or at any rate what they tried didn't work. And I never got my head clear all year.

"I qualified 12th at Zolder and twice rode through the pack to eighth after crashes but then I couldn't start the bike after the second time and after that it just went downhill.







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"The next race I didn't qualify and it just blew me away, then in Portugal we blew four ignitions during the training. I was training in the week on a two-stroke and racing a four-stroke. I needed time to get my head straight - just one weekend might have been enough – but every week there was either a GP or a German championship. There was a race, we were at it."

Kosak wanted to keep Wyatt but he knew he had to get out. But again it was late January before he had a ride for 2005. "I had spoken to Sarholz before, just casually, then suddenly at the end of January he made my manager a concrete offer and I was on the next plane back from SA. One week later I broke my collarbone!

"I came back and had a brilliant race at the first Dutch championship – second to Sword in the first race - then one week later I had a car crash and broke my collarbone again. I just wasn't fit enough and hadn't ridden enough before Zolder, then in Spain I had a first moto 10th but I pushed much too hard at the start of race two. I was top five out of the gate and wanted to stay there but I wasn't fit enough yet to run that pace for an entire moto."

Still, top 10 finishes were a regular occurrence by mid-summer and on wildly different surfaces at Matchams, in France and in Sweden. But then came another blow.

"It was at Aichwald in Germany, the race where Townley got hurt too, just one week before Sun City. I holeshot the first two motos and was riding really well but the third moto I missed the gate completely. I went off last and those guys back there brake for the first turn. I don't know what they are thinking because that corner is wide open. I ran straight into the back of them. I put my knee down - the bad knee and I heard it crack. The pain was unbearable.

"I still had the speed but I couldn't last a race anymore all year. It was my fault. I shouldn't have been riding at all. My knee needed time off but when you don't have a contract yet for the next season you want to show everyone your speed. It almost backfired but I can be thankful that Sarholz knew what I am capable of.

"He didn't tell me it was going to be KTM but he had told me from the word go that he wanted me to go MX1. I didn't really want to - I wasn't sure if I was big enough - but after riding the 250 two-stroke I know it feels good. I only got to ride the 450 once so far, a production bike, for 15 minutes. Within that quarter-of-an-hour all of my apprehensions were gone. I get to the BT bike just before Mantova and I can't wait.

There are no excuses now. Ken De Dycker's '04 mechanic Eddie is working for me, I have a factory bike and if a race doesn't work out it's down to me. The knee is as good as it will ever be. The ligaments are never going to be okay again so the only way was to train the muscles around the knee and I have been doing a lot of training to make them stronger.

"I've had a rough time these past five years but I'm looking to show everyone what I am capable of this summer.'



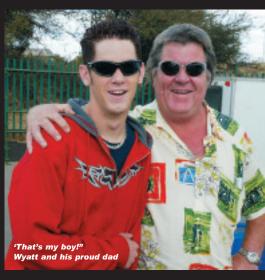
Soft stuff

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

"I used to hate sand. My first sand national in SA I got lapped three times by Grant. When you come from the hardpack in SA to race the Dutch in sand you find a completely different riding mentality. They learn from an early age to keep their speed up because once you let your momentum drop it is hard work to build again. Back home in SA everything is so tight, all stop and go, riding inside lines.

"In Holland there are a few top guys who can switch lines at will but most of the rest will run the same line until it is completely wrecked and only then will they change it. I like to think of myself as an all-rounder now but to be quite honest I now prefer to ride in deep sand.

"On hardpack you can be riding so well but you just sit in the train – in sand you can make passes and be passed. It is pure racing. You can pass somebody three times in one lap and he will pass you back because there are so many different lines. That makes racing fun.



Daddy's boy

HIGHS AND LOWS

"My dad was with me all through the first four years but when I turned 18 we didn't have the best of relationships. We get on fine again now and I owe him a lot. If it wasn't for my dad I wouldn't be here at all. I'd be back in SA doing a normal job.

"It was almost a case of him caring too much. He wanted the best for me and as a kid I used to listen to what he said and do it that way but when you get to 18 you start to rebel against that. My dad did so much for me. He gave up my sister's childhood, he gave up his business, just to come to Europe with me chasing a dream. He won't admit but I know he regrets missing out on my sister growing up because I know I regret it."





THERE'S LIGHT at the end of the tunnel at last! Spring isn't too far off now and this barren time for UK motocross will soon be over.

We are very much in the pre-season period now as opposed to the off-season break and the various pro riders I work with are disappearing off around Europe in search of sun and sand (or both) to ride in, test new 2006 bits and get the bike time and fitness up.

If you have been training regularly over the off-season and keeping those fitness levels up now's the time to change things around to make the training much more motocross specific and prepare your body for the rigours of racing.

Motocross racing is high-intensity exercise as we know. As intensity increases, the body's oxygen supply struggles to keep up and continue to provide oxygen for respiration. There comes a point where one of the by-products of energy production - lactic acid cannot be broken down and neutralized by the body and it begins to accumulate. Lactic acid builds up in the working muscles making it a

more acidic environment. The condition is known as acidosis and it is experienced as the

feeling of sore or 'heavy' muscles.

This obviously affects your ability to maintain your pace and on the motorbike you may feel this soreness in your arms, shoulders or legs. The pace has to drop and you are suddenly working your way backwards in the pack and just hanging on until that final lap. Acidosis also affects the way in which the muscle works and hinders its contraction-relaxation mechanism. This hampers co-ordination capacity and greatly affects technique - a big problem in a sport which is heavily influenced by technique and skill - so you start to ride poorly and get frustrated at your mistakes.

Fitness training for motocross is seasonal and has different components depending on the rider and time of the season. Hopefully you will have been following long duration and medium intensity levels of exercise over the winter so far. This will have helped your body burn fat as well as helping it become more efficient at

taking in, transporting and using oxygen and started to change the make-up of your muscle fibres to be more endurance based

Now that we are only six to eight weeks away from the start of competition we need to think about being in good condition and physically prepared for racing. The training done up to this point may not been seen as very 'event specific' – that is, it doesn't necessarily replicate the heart rates seen when racing.

Now is the time for this!

One of the best ways to train specifically for motocross is to train at the intensity level at which lactic acid starts to accumulate in the muscles and acidosis becomes a limiting factor in your riding. This intensity point is generally known as the 'lactic threshold' level. For MX this is generally the intensity level at which you ride on the track at the start of the race - imagine how much better your results would be if you could maintain that intensity of effort and speed all race long!





The build-up of lactic acid in your muscles will add seconds to your lap times - unless you tailor your training to deal with it

Words by Alan Milway Photo by Sutty

• Training at this 'threshold' level will allow your body to cope with the build-up of lactic acid and allow you to not only maintain performance and speed when it builds up but raise the level of exercise at which it starts to build up.

• Find your ideal training range for this – it is usually about 90-95 per cent of your maximum heart rate or the equivalent level of exercise that you can just sustain for four to five minutes. These five minutes of very hard exercise forms one 'bout' of exercise and after a rest interval is repeated four to six times. This level of exercise will be higher than race levels if you can only just sustain it for five minutes in one go and will allow you to up your 'ceiling' and go harder for longer on the bike.

• You can use any piece of equipment to train in this way – cycling, running or rowing machines are ideal. Aim to lift your exercise level right up and keep it steady - using a heart rate monitor is very useful for this and you will

soon learn the range which you can maintain for this duration. You can set a distance on the rower or a level/gear on the bike and maintain a set rpm for the duration of the bout.

Two sessions a week of this high intensity training are ideal. Any more and you won't recover sufficiently between training sessions. Include one long steady cardio session and/or a weights training session into your week too to give a good pre-season training routine.

• High intensity exercise can be made more fun if there are a couple of you. Racing a friend of similar fitness to a set point - up a hill, through a park, round a track etc - will help you get the best from your training.

• Don't forget that this kind of training will also help your recovery rates. This kind of training will help you to go into the second (or third) race fresher than before. Lactic acid build-up has a negative effect on muscle movements. It has been shown that low intensity exercise following hard efforts helps reduce acidosis much quicker than just stopping altogether. Therefore in the rest interval walk, cycle slowly or perform the activity at a snail's pace. Now you know why some pro riders are straight onto the stationary bike in the awning after a race.

Hard efforts that lift your heart rates right up are the name of the game now - but only if you have been training up to this point. If you haven't you won't be able to just jump straight into this kind of training.

These efforts will be best in getting you all set for racing and help you push your riding levels, have more concentration and fun on the bike and enjoy the riding and racing more than just hanging on after five minutes!

Including other forms of training such as strength training and core work are also important so try to put together a balanced plan with the help of a trainer or through good understanding of your needs.

Mike Metzger flips out in practice... then throws out an old-school Indian Air Jim McNeil and Mike Mason discuss knitting patterns



It's all about who's got the most bad-ass flip up their sleeve as Winter X goes off in Aspen

Photos by Paul Buckley

YOU'D HAVE never guessed that too much snow would be a problem at Winter X but a fresh fall of eight inches of powder causes no end of difficulties for the men and machines of the games' Moto X Best Trick comp.

Snow starts falling just before Saturday night's prelims and even though thousands of FMX fans are lining the fences – and millions more are watching live internet feeds - the riders stand together and wisely decide not to jump on the grounds of safety.

The snow's still falling early on Sunday morning as a mini-blizzard engulfs the town but by noon the skies are clear and the Aspen airspace is finally ready to be invaded by 10 of the world's finest freestylers.

The prelims shakedown the field from 10 to five riders and it seems that if you ain't got a good flip variation you ain't going through to the finals. It's Swiss whizz-kid Mat Rebaud who kicks American ass in the qualifying round as his inverted saran-wrap out-points Ronnie 'Kung Fu' Faisst, Brian 'Boner Skalansky' Deegan, Jeremy 'Twitch' Stenberg and pre-event favourite Nate 'The Destroyer' Adams who doesn't seem too phased. "You want to save something for the final but you can't get knocked out - you just have to find a happy medium.

Someone who's not found a happy medium is Mike Metzger who's making his debut on the Monster Energy Kawasaki. Metz's tweaked-out, no-foot to one-hander-lander flip is judged to be two tenths of a point short of a qualifying score and Metz is out. He's not shy about expressing his displeasure either as he trashes a chair then verbally trashes the judges, the Mulisha and anyone else he can think to blame.

By the time Metz has calmed down the sun has set and the floodlights have been lit ready for the five-man final which will see 10 different back-flip variations all over the 90-foot gap can anyone remember when freestyle motocross was actually about individualism and not just who can pull the best flip?

Anyhoo, it's Faisst who breaks the ice by running first and safely executing a one-handed back-flip to one-handed side-saddle landing for a score of 90.6 which will be good for the bronze medal position.

Rebaud's saran-flip with no-hander-lander is good enough for the silver. Mat seems more nervous about getting his English language skills right than he is about pulling off his bad-ass mid-air manoeuvre and the X-Games newbie must definitely be considered a threat to take gold at this summer's back-flip games.

The big winner on the night is Jeremy Stenberg who brings a new flip-trick to the party and goes home wearing the gold medal. Twitch's no-handed back-flip to can-can and side-saddle landing easily out-points even Rebaud's best efforts. "I've been working on the trick for the past month," confesses Twitch. "I didn't know if it would work in competition so I was pumped that it all came together."

Check out Twitch's feet hooked under the footpegs to stop him going into freefall!



 Jeremy Stenberg
 Mat Rebaud
 Ronnie Faisst
 Nate Adams
 Brian Deegan (Yamaha) (KTM) (Honda) (Yamaha) (Honda) 93.01

93.01 92.40 90.60 90.40 88.00





rounds is Douglas' team-mate Takahisa Fujinami. Fujigas seems to be riding well but a pair of fives in sections three and four, then a messy three in six all but kill the Japanese rider's chance of making the three-man final.

Sherco's Albert Cabestany finishes fourth on the night and misses out on the final by the







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narrowest of margins. A five on the opener followed by a dab on the rocks then another failure in section three makes it look like the Spaniard is in for a long, hard night but Albert pulls himself together and goes clean – except for a single prod in section six – for the rest of the round

Jeroni Fajardo finishes third in the qualifying round on his Gas Gas. The Spaniard starts in a similar fashion to Fujigas by going 1-0-5-5 in the first four sections but from there Fajardo stays clean which is good enough to give Jeroni the final spot in tonight's final.

Second is defending world champ Adam Raga. Raga digs deep and gets through the eight sections and dual lane race for just seven marks lost but the real sensation of the qualifiers is his teenage countryman Antonio Bou on the Beta.

Bou loses two marks in section one then cleans the next couple before dropping another dab each on the boxes and waterfall sections. He picks up a mark on time and another when Raga beats him in the dual lane race but Antonio knows he has nothing to gain by racing Adam and lets him go safe in the knowledge that victory in the heats is secure.

But for the final – which for all purposes may as well be a Spanish championship round – all the scores are reset. It's Fajardo who'll have to tackle each hazard first while Raga and Bou watch intently and try and figure out the best way through.

It all starts badly for Fajardo who claims he's blinded by the search lights as he crests the summit of section one and picks up a five as his eyes try and adjust to the pitch black of the other side. Raga makes it through clean while Bou gets in a little trouble but manages to foot his way out for a two.

Section two is a bogey section for everyone as they each pick up five while the two Gas Gas team-mates clean three with Bou dropping one. Section four sees Fajardo five while t'other two go clean meaning the scores before the dual lane races are Fajardo on 15, Bou on eight and Raga on five.







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the ktm tough one

Mark Jackson finds life tough down the pit

WEC star David Knight certainly is as he cleans up at The KTM Tough One '06

Words & photos by Jonty Edmunds

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WHEN THE going gets tough, David Knight gets going. And at The KTM Tough One '06 that's exactly what the reigning Enduro 3 world champion does as he blasts to a convincing win after making the gruelling Nantmawr Quarry circuit look easy.

Claiming a convincing win despite being handicapped at the start of the event and made to run up a steep climb before getting on his bike, Knighter needs no time at all to catch up with his premier class rivals and once again proves just how dominant he is in extreme events.

"That was one of the most enjoyable races I've had in a long time," reckons Knight at the end of what was a two-hour ordeal for most riders. "I've competed in the dark several times but never raced against other riders. It is completely different but great fun. I was able to catch and pass quite a few of the premier class riders that were stuck on the log and rock sections early on lap one, then $\bar{\mathbf{I}}$ just got my head down to try and catch Paul and Wayne."

With Fast Eddy getting the jump from the drop of the flag he and fellow Honda rider Wayne Braybrook open up an early lead with Edmondson ahead at the end of the first lap to claim £250. Soon after Wayne hits the front before a mistake sees him back in second with Knighter fast approaching.

Needing just over half-an-hour to take the lead, Knighter soon starts to open up a lead and as the race reaches the halfway point the rider many thought would push him the hardest calls it a day and heads back to his van.

"I messed up one hill three times," explains Paul Edmondson. "The first time I just didn't get the right line, the second time I was in too much of a hurry and the third time, well, I ended underneath my bike and decided enough was enough.

With Edmondson's withdrawal showing just how hard the race is. Knight starts to lap his way through the premier class before claiming the chequered flag and two cheques - one for £500 for leading at the one-hour mark and another for £1000 for topping the race.

Winning the race is obviously what I came to do but it's a great way of starting the new season. I honestly thought it would take longer to catch the leaders from the start than it did. The race was spot on."

Displaying the very same skills that earned him a runner-up finish to Knighter at the '05 running of the Hell's Gate race in Italy, Wayne again places second to DK having ridden a determined race.

"It all went really well for me. I started well, passed Paul but then made a small mistake in the rocks. There was no way I was going to compete with David but I'm well chuffed with second and to have got onto the podium on my little four-stroke.'

Third after struggling to get into his stride at the start of the race is TM-mounted Scot Euan McConnell. Crashing several times in the first hour, the tall WEC regular steps up a gear as darkness falls to make it onto the final step of the rostrum.

"Finishing on the podium first time out on the TM is great," explains Euan. "I rode badly in the first hour but then much better in the second. I really enjoyed the event - it was great to have a really tough race.'

Missing the podium by one spot is reigning British trials champ Graham Jarvis aboard his Sherco. Another rider to start slowly before working his way through the pack and on to a strong finish, Graham impresses many by making light work of even the nastiest of rock sections.

"I pretty much did my own thing during the race and didn't really have any battles with anyone. I made things hard for myself



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The Dumb One!

IT'S TOUGH AT THE TOP AND IT'S NO EASIER FURTHER DOWN THE PECKING ORDER WHERE THE OLD ADAGE 'NO SENSE, NO FEELING' RINGS TRUE WITH SUTTY

Words by Dumb Sutty

There are certain sounds that are synonymous with certain sports — cricket has leather on willow and soccer has the horrible noise of breaking beer bottles crashing down on away supporters' noggins. If I had to choose one noise to sum up my recent extreme hare scrambles experience it would have to be 'braaaaaaaaaaaaaaa...(silence)...crack' — that's the exact noise a two-stroke KTM makes when you fire it out of a rut and into a rather solid tree.

"I think I've broken the light," I shout at Jonty Edmunds who just happens to appear as if by magic, kinda like the fez-wearing shopkeeper out of Mr Benn. "Try turning it on," comes his dumbass reply. "It is turned on..." "Well you're ******d then ain't ya!"

Compassion isn't one of Jonty's strongest skills, just like riding in t'dark with no lights is not one of mine. All of which explains why with just one third of this year's KTM-sponsored Tough One completed – and the darkness setting in – I was, not to beat around the bush, completely boned!

Being boned was the last thing on my mind as I enjoyed an early morning shower roughly eight hours before the Tough One began. I had a simple plan for the day which consisted of attacking the course harder than last year and ripping the ***s out of Knighter if he wore a neckerchief again like last year. Luckily for the Manxman his luggage was too full with lights to fit in any Fred-from-Scooby-Doo-inspired garments. So while he would be able to see in the darker stages of the race he did run the risk of getting a cold neck — it's tough at the top.

I don't have either a neckerchief or a kazillion lights with me or a bike for that matter but KTM's Shaun

Sisterson does – have a bike I mean, not a neckerchief. Shaun (he's the new marketing manager at KTM) has hooked me up with a sparkly EXC200 to 'test' and D3's top dog Julian Stephens does the decent thing by popping in a couple of mousses and giving the bike a good going over to make sure everything is tickety-boo come the 4pm start time. I'm a little concerned by the lack of lights on my bike. I have one – the stock one – while Knighter looks like a mobile disco with a shedload of high-tech looking bike-mounted ones and some strapped to his helmet for good measure.

But Lord Jonty of Wales reckons I'll be alreet as fellow EXC200-riding off-road legend Ady Smith has the same set-up as me and he isn't moaning about it so I close my cakehole and get kitted up ready for the off.

Come start time I'm all fired up and ready to go. The Pro class leaves the line first and a minute later the Experts and Clubman qualifiers give chase. I fudge my dead engine start up by failing to fire up the little KTM first kick but with a little pushing and shoving and some creative line selection I soon battle my way up to the mid-pack running order of the Expert class.

The course seems to flow a little better than last year's — except for the freakin' tyre section which I still hate with a passion but that's okay because I know it hates me too. The section that causes me most discomfort is the row of four logs that have just a little more than a bike's length in-between them.

Now don't get me wrong, I usually have no trouble passing difficult logs – just ask Tom Church who's still choking on the remnants of one I laid in his luxury loft apartment's WC – but these buggers have me stumped. The WOR marshals do an excellent job though and most laps when I get stuck straddling one of them they come along and pull me off – nice work fellas!

It's in the rock section that's just after the logs where I enjoy one of the most surreal moments of my 45-minute Tough One adventure.

After getting stuck between two boulders the 'toomer's running a little on the warm side – steam's billowing out of the radiator overflow pipe and I'm desperate to keep moving to get some air through the rads to cool the puppy's temperature down.

My way's blocked by fallen riders and Honda's Roger Harvey and Sherco's Malcolm Rathmell just happen to be stood there. Both these guys have been good enough to lend the magazine long-term test-weapons this year and I'm sat there on a steaming and battered looking bike that was pristine before I got my paws on it – hardly a good advert for lending me anything, let alone almost five grand's worth of machinery. Luckily for me – and my future bike blagging escapades – neither Roger, Malc or Shaun are there when the 'braaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa...(silence)...crack' incident happens.

Jonty is right there however but he fails to capture the moment (freakin' amateur) that more or less ends my 2006 Tough One campaign.

Even though I keep pushing on until darkness falls and just beyond – although the lap I do manage in the dark is quite frankly pants-fillingly-scary – I park up and wait for the chequers so I can at least claim a finish.

There's a whole heap of peeps I'd like to thank for helping me to my fine 25th place finish at this year's Tough One. First of all a big thanks to Stevie Ireland and the WOR crew – the Tough One is one of the most enjoyable events I've ever ridden and I'll be back next year, either racing (if they'll let me) or as a spectator. It truly is an awesome event. I'd also like to thank Shaun Sisterson and KTM for the loan of the bike. The rebuild bill has probably killed KTM's marketing budget for the year but I can't say enough about how well the EXC200 performs (although maybe bull-bars on the headlight would

be a good idea?).
Finally, I'd also like to say cheers to Woody @ Smith,
Vic @ Motul, MRS for Gaerne boots, Amy for the
unnecessary one-hour finger and much-needed
oatmeallraisin cookie style sustenance,
Freestylextreme and Skin Industries, Uncle Jack
Burnicle, Jonty, Michelin, Julian Stephens and most of
all Stephen Hawking who once said "it is not clear that
intelligence has any long-term survival value".

Here's to being dumb!









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t was 7am on Saturday and the mist drifted over the magnificent Gatorback Raceway in northern Florida. Suddenly the American national anthem echoed across the amazing setting of the 34th Winter Mini Olympics, possibly the biggest motocross event I've ever covered!

Around 2000 of the best riders from the USA, South Africa, New Zealand, Europe and good old Blighty descended on the Gainesville circuit to do battle, supported by just about every major manufacturer and company involved in our amazing industry.

Six days of SX and MX action on two separate perfectly manicured circuits for a total of 78 races on each day. It sounds amazing but it's true! And there were 35 different classes from the tiny guys of the PeeWees up to the A class boasting such stars as the UK's Adam Chatfield and America's Zach Osborne.

I had a phone call from Richard Clarke asking if I would like to join him in America for the trip - it was a tough one but he twisted my arm and off I popped, camera in one hand and pasty in other.

His son Steven needed some bits so after squeezing two sets of wheels and a complete suspension system into our already bulging bags Mr Customs Bloke said "chaps, you're overweight"! Now me being a sensitive soul I took offence. "Dude, you're out of order, I just like my food..." He didn't take kindly to that joke and charged us around £140 extra each.

After 10 hours in the air we landed in Sandford, Florida, to be greeted by beautiful sunshine and smiling Yankee faces - I love America! The plan was to meet Steven, his mum and Elliott Banks Browne who was also racing at the event at the track the next day but we got itchy feet and decided to drive to MTF in Georgia and meet them there.

MTF has turned into a winter training ground for all the top English riders - not only Clarkey and Elliott but Scott Probert, Lewis Hall and Jackson Evans were all waiting to greet us on our arrival. It was like being back home.

After packing up the truck and getting all the supplies sorted we hit the road for Gainesville which is around two hours away. Following a stop at Wendy's for the best chicken burger I've had in a long time we got to the track for around 7pm. After picking up our passes and signing on we were actually shown to our parking space before settling down for the night.

Now I'd never been to an American motocross race - only supercross - and when I took a peek out of the truck my eyes nearly popped out of my head. Trucks as far as you can see and everyone rattling around on minibikes and golf carts. Cool!

Like an excited 10-year-old I wolfed my bacon and eggs - perfectly turned out by Mrs C by the way - before me, Clarkey and Elliott all piled on the pitbikes for a tour of the huge venue. It was amazing with factory trucks on show, huge lanes of stalls, food everywhere (which was nice) and to top it all two amazing tracks, one MX and one SX. I was in heaven!

For the first day it was qualifying for the main supercross event. Races never stopped and by

4.30pm it was all done. Steven and Elliott qualified for all their Main Event finals - you can actually enter up to four different categories (it's all too confusing to explain but it works well)

Elliott had a nightmare and crashed which put him way down the field as once you give the Americans an inch in supercross they're gone. Steven on the other hand rode brilliantly and finished in the top 10 and top six in his respective groups.

From Wednesday onwards it was motocross and our flying young guns were looking forward to it - both qualified well after two days of heat races. By this time my feet and head were dazed, one with the sun and one with the amount of walking I had to do.

Clarkey rode well and again produced good solid top 10 finishes in his finals but Elliott looked tired and made too many mistakes - but he knows for next time what he's got to do.

All too soon it was time to say our goodbyes and head back to Sandford for our flight home. Mrs C was driving the truck back to MTF while me and Richard hopped into our trusty hire car for our trip to the airport.

I can honestly say it was better than any GP I've ever been too. The tracks were amazing, the pits were perfect and the entertainment wasn't all about how drunk and annoying you can get. And you can add to that the wonderful hospitality of the American people. I'll be back in 2006 for sure.

Just like to say a big thank you to the Clarkes for looking after me so well, MTF for inviting me to their gorgeous Thanksgiving dinner and all the people I met who were so helpful. Cheers everyone!



Malcolm Stewart shows the kinda le his big bro Bubba's better



RAY'SREVIEW

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE FUNNY!

II-in-all 2005 was a good and fun year for youth motocross in the UK and an . exceptional year for Rage.

To cover any form of motorsport you need to be at the events consistently which in 2005 I have - whether BYMX, BSMA or on roadtrips in Europe or the USA. Let's all sit back and look at the highs and lows of our now completed year.

At the end of 2004 Matchams Park was running a really great winter series for the nippers. It was always very cold but nearly always had a quality line-up of riders and some great prizes. In 2005 it's all gone a bit quiet with no full line-ups anymore. What has changed in a year? The track's better so what's happened?

MX Mum just disappeared. Around October all the lovely mums were refusing to be photographed as their deep summer tans faded. Well, 2006 will see a welcome return of Rage's star feature – keep your eyes peeled.

My roadtrip to the Millsaps Training Facility in the USA was just amazing, a complete eye-opener to what the sport can achieve if done correctly with perfectly prepared tracks and 100 per cent commitment from the trainer. You've only got to look at the champions MTF helped produce in 2005 - Joe Dark (BYMX champion), Tommy Searle (U21 champion) and Steven Clarke (world 85cc champion). I think that says it all.

Our first European championship round at Pontrilas turned into a mud bath. British weather again kicked everyone in the ging gang goolies and took the edge off what could have been a great meeting. But despite the mud and goo two real positive things emerged.

Firstly, the track team proved what can be done with a lot of hard graft - it was worked on through the night with two feet of mush skimmed off leaving it near perfect for Sunday. The second positive was, of course, our total domination of the 125 class where we took the top seven places.

What about the battle of the nationals -BSMA vs BYMX vs British Masters? Personally, I think two ran great events and all had amazing racing but for me both the BYMX and BSMA come out on top with the British Masters flagging behind in third due to the amazing scenes at Abram which, to be honest, I would rather forget.

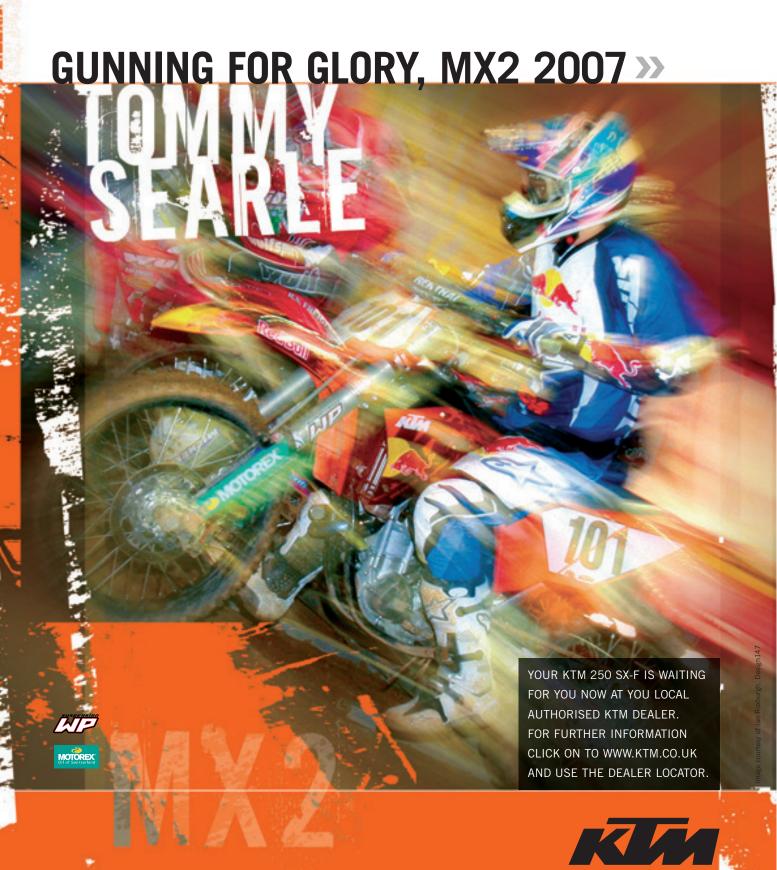
One thing I will say - let's all start working together and move the sport forward. And listen to the riders more. This season looks much more positive with only one clash - but that's

one clash too many!

One of the most frustrating things about our wonderful sport is the Crazy Dad Syndrome. Shouting and screaming at your son to go faster is not big and it certainly isn't clever. I see it week-in, week-out and it seems to be getting worse. Give the kid a break - he's trying his hardest. I just wonder how many of the dads who lose it have ever ridden and know how hard it actually is?

Last but not least, both Kawasaki and 661 ran fun days for all their sponsored nippers. I was there at both events and it shows these two giants of our sport are happy to give something back. All the stars were there, there was lots of gooning around and freebies were given to every rider - good show chaps, let's see more of this from others!

So that's the review of the year - the good, the bad and the funny I'd say. I'll see you all at the races in 2006.





MYBESTRAC

ith the season start fast approaching, this month's My Best Race comes from Motocross World team rider Lewis Hall (above) who will be campaigning a 250F Kawasaki in 2006.

"My best race was back in July 2005 at the fifth round of the BYMX championship. I was racing at Pontrilas near Hereford and it was the last race of the weekend.

"I went into the first turn side by side with Shane Carless – it was such a buzz getting such a great start at this level, I was pumped and ready to race. I just got back from a broken leg and it was only my third time on my bike, I really wanted to perform well and I knew even with a good start other riders would come past as my fitness and bike speed wasn't quite there yet.

"I kept pushing myself and tried my best to keep them at bay. I only dropped a few places and finished in 12th and that was such a good position for me. I was really pleased with my effort and went home on a high."



BACKINTHEDAY

ack in the day is certainly picking up a bit of a following and loads of riders all have great stories to tell. This month's featured rider is MotoXtreme's new team member and all-round good guy Mark Hucklebridge.

"When I was 10 years old my dad bought me my first motocross bike - a Yamaha YZ80 air-cooled. I had the bike for about two months before I started racing. During the first two months I did a practice day at Tog Hill near Bath to get used to riding the bike. Tog Hill is renowned for being really hilly and I struggled to get round - my dad had to run around after me pushing me up the hills.

"A few weeks later I was lining up for my first race, it was at a flat stubble field near Devizes. Back then there was no tricked out Sprinter or camper van but we did have our trusty Cavalier and one-bike trailer.

"I had the #1 plate on my bike and was so excited about racing for the first time but I was a little nervous as my 80cc group was mixed with 100cc riders as well. I raced all day and managed to do the whole track better than I thought but I didn't know where I finished as we didn't know how to work out the results.

There was a presentation at the end of the day so me and dad went along to watch. They were calling out the names of riders who had won trophies - I didn't think I had one as he hadn't said my name by the time the only trophy left was for first place. Guess what - the guy called my name out as the winner! We were so shocked.

"So I actually won my first ever race – it's a great memory.'







RAY'SRIBTICKLER!

ow I don't usually laugh when I see a big crash but I couldn't help myself at the Mini Os recently.

Jimmy Albertson and Brock Tickle were having a great race and at the last corner Albertson went straight through the hay bales and wiped out a photographer.

I thought the poor guy had maybe broken his leg but it turned out that his shorts and pants were ripped clean off and he was unable to stand without giving everyone a flash of his meat and two veg.

I'M STANDING in line for passport control at Gatwick Airport - it's 5am on November 18 and I'm about to fly to the USA.

I'm gradually getting closer to the end of the line and I'm looking at all the different faces of the people around me and wondering what life must be like for them. Is it me or does everyone look miserable?

I then think I really do have a fantastic life and career. I look at all the businessmen and wonder if they're truly happy. I did it for 19 years and I know I wasn't, I had no passion for what I was doing and they look the same.

I'm sure lots do enjoy what they do but I bet a lot dream about doing something they would enjoy day-in, day-out. I'm standing there in shorts and trainers and then I wonder if they're looking at me in the same way. 'That guy probably doesn't have a job, no way does he run his own business' - that sort of thing. In fact, I guarantee that's what they're thinking and I'm loving every minute of it.

When I'm out with friends I feel quite awkward when discussing what I do for a living. They all think I sit on my ass doing nothing then disappear at the weekends for a jolly. But I put a tremendous amount of effort into what I do, from 8am (shouldn't that be 8pm - Sutty) to sometimes late in to the night with deadlines to hit, pictures to be processed, website updates and so on and so on (I'm going to start crying SL) but I wouldn't change it for the world.

I get to shoot photographs which is my passion, I get to go to the best races in the world, I get to meet my idols within a sport that I love and I work for the best off-road magazine on the planet!

So the moral of the story is go for your dreams, work out what you want to do and go for it. I did and I haven't looked back since.

Until next time, safe riding...

Got any youth news for Rage? Give Ray Chuss a bell on 07773 609994 or



WITH A LIST OF WORLD CHAMPIONS AND GP STARS AS LONG AS YOUR ARM, BELGIUM IS ONE OF THE MAJOR PLAYERS IN MOTOCROSS - ALTHOUGH THE OVERALL IMAGE AND PROFESSIONALISM OF THE BELGIAN DOMESTIC SERIES HAS UP TO NOW BEEN SADLY LACKING. BUT THIS COULD ALL BE ABOUT TO CHANGE THANKS TO BRIT EX-PAT CHRIS BURNHAM AND BUSINESSMAN CARLO VANDEKERKHOF WHOSE 2CMX COMPANY RECENTLY INKED A FIVE-YEAR PROMOTION DEAL.

Words by Tom Jacobs Photo by Pixelpony

DBR: It's a big step from GP rider to championship promoter?

CB: "Absolutely but it did not come as overnight as it might seem. When I decided to quit riding halfway through last season I got more involved with Carlo [Vandekerkhof] who had already been supporting me as a sponsor. We have similar ideas on the promotion of our sport and we saw some real opportunities."

DBR: What is it that makes this championship potentially so attractive?

CB: "First of all the level of riding. Honestly, judging from a rider's perspective, there's no national championship - apart from the AMA maybe - that's so competitive. You have some of the best riders in the world here with Everts, Ramon and Strijbos. Then there's Joel Smets who will contest the series as a sort of farewell tour and he's still

You have a bunch of fast young guys like De Dycker, Van Daele and Priem and then you have seasoned pros like Melotte, Caps and Theybers. Eight Belgian riders finished in the top 18 of the MX1 championship last year so you can not underestimate the depth of the field either and on top of that you have the 'expats'. Last year you had Josh [Coppins] and Ben [Townley], De Reuver, Leok and Pichon who participated in one or more rounds. We are working to get some high calibre guest riders back for this year. Crockard seemed very interested and I had encouraging conversations with Jan De Groot and Kurt Nicoll."

DBR: What's wrong with the championship now?

CB: "Actually, quite a lot. The races basically look the same as they used to 25 or 30 years ago. We need to work hard to improve the overall facilities like paddocks, VIP hospitality and the press room. One of the most visible changes for this season will be a pitlane like you have in GPs. So in terms of overall presentation the events will look a lot more professional, we will have the same podium at every round and with important sponsors at crucial places they will get a lot better value for money. Last year Carlo already managed to introduce some new outside sponsors and we will continue to develop in that direction."

DBR: With the help of the promoter's Holy Grail called TV?

CB: It might seem a bit weird for other countries but motocross taps into the mainstream in Belgium and that's something we are keen to exploit. Top riders and events get full pages in dailies over here while Everts and Smets are household names to Joe Public. Live TV is very unlikely because it's so expensive to produce and the events follow a three-race format but we are pushing hard to get more and better quality coverage in both the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking part of the country." DBR: We heard you even have your own Suzy Perry?

CB: [laughs] "Sort of, only she's younger and better looking. No, seriously, we will have Cynthia Reekmans who is a former Miss Belgium working with us on the TV side among other things. Besides mainstream coverage we will be producing our content for the internet where we will be offering streaming of the races and behind the scenes stuff. So that's cool news for race fans worldwide. Cynthia will do some pitlane colour stuff and we will probably have another beauty on screen so eat your heart out BBC!"

DBR: Your first season is looking good with the hugely popular pair of Everts and Smets in their last year?

CB: "Obviously we are happy to have such stars on board for our first season because we can give the crowd a unique opportunity to see them at work close to home. However, we are very conscious that we have to look after the future of the sport. With guys like Ramon, Strijbos and De Dycker maturing we might even see the new generation of superstars taking over this year."

DBR: Sure they are fast on the track but with all respect these riders also seem a bit dull?

CB: Not everybody is as talkative as Joel Smets but even Stefan was a shadow of himself in front of a camera when he was a kid and look how he has developed! With some riders I think it's only an impression that they are boring because with so much internal competition it's hard for young riders to get into the limelight in Belgium. They will find their own voice as they gain media experience and if necessary we will help them to feel more confident and speak out."

DBR: If 2CMX gets its act together you could maybe even steal some attention from the world championship...

CB: "We're not here to create any commotion or to try and compete with GPs – at the end of the day it's still the world championship that matters most. Clearly we want to give the Belgian crowd a good show and our goal is to make the sport more popular over here. So if motocross gains momentum through the Belgian championship the GPs will benefit as well.

"I don't see it as a problem - you will always have different opinions but motocross is not MotoGP. We are grass roots and need to stay close to the people. Less races is not the solution to let the sport grow. Besides – unlike MotoGP – MX riders need the physical aspect of competing in races to get into shape."

DBR: You still look very much in shape yourself - we guess you still ride regularly but do you miss the racing itself?

CB: "Actually I have almost not been riding at all! I did a little bit of test work for the Kawasaki factory team and that's about it. I don't really miss the competition at the moment because I have so many challenges to deal with in my new job. It's a very exciting time for me and luckily it's not all management stuff. Last year I have been working with Marvin Van Daele and that's something that's very satisfying as well. It's nice that I'm able to pass my experience on, especially if you see how it's helping people to make headway. I have not been so thrilled about the new season for a long time!"

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